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John Breckinridge

ESSAYS

ON

GRACE,

FAITH, AND EXPERIENCE,

WHEREIN SEVERAL

GOSPEL TRUTHS

ARE STATED AND ILLUSTRATED,

AND THEIR

OPPOSITE ERRORS POINTED OUT.

BY SAMUEL ECKING.

THIRD EDITION.



TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR,

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FAITH OF DEVILS;

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH DELIVERED AT HIS ORDINATION,

AND A FEW OBSERVATIONS ON SANDEMAN & CUDWORTH.

WITH

FOUR SERMONS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

This is the true Grace of God wherein ye stand.—1 Peter iv. 12.

Earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints.—Jude 3.

Experience worketh Hope.—Rom. v. 4.

LIVERPOOL,

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SERMON I.

SERMON I.

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*Then had the Churches rest throughout all Judea, and
Gallilee and Samaria, and were edified, and walk-
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A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

AUTHOR.

MR. SAMUEL ECKING was born at Shrewsbury, December 5, 1757. By the mother's side, he was descended from two very ancient and respectable families, (the Adderton's and Blodwell's) from whom his mother inherited considerable property : But, unfortunately, marrying a person of imprudent conduct, who in a few years, squandered it all away, she was left with two children, a daughter four years old, and Samuel, about two. Being now reduced to penury, she retired from Shrewsbury to a cottage about two miles off, where for the space of two years, she earned, with her own hands, a subsistence for herself and children. Her circumstances at last drew the attention and compassion of her friends, who removed her residence to Shrewsbury, and placed her in a situation somewhat more comfortable. Here she was enabled to put her children to school, and a relation of hers dying soon afterwards, she became again entitled to a considerable property, part of which went to extinguish her husband's debts, which amounted to upwards of £100l.

Mr. ECKING was at this time about twelve years of age, of a disposition naturally sedate and studious, and applied himself to learning with such diligence and industry, that at the age of fifteen he was taken into an academy kept by Mr. Boore, in Shrewsbury, in the capacity of an usher, where he continued upwards of two years, until the decease of the master put an end to the school. By this time, he had acquired so much favour

and reputation in the school, that he was importuned both by parents and scholars, to undertake the mastership, which, however, he declined on account of his youth, and engaged himself again as an usher, in a respectable academy in the same town, under the direction of Mr. Gentleman, a dissenting minister, with whom he continued till towards the close of the year 1777 ;—and in January, 1778, opened a school himself, in which station he continued acquiring additional reputation, till his removal to Chester.

We learn from the discourse preached on occasion of his death,* that he himself had said, “ He was not without some awakenings of conscience, even in his very early years ;—not enough indeed to break the natural attachment of the heart to vanity and folly ;—yet enough to restrain him from running into those vices which the generality of young men give way to ;—and enough to convince him, when he had acquired more experience, that there may be serious alarms in the mind, concerning the evil consequences of sin, productive also of many seemingly good resolutions, and a temporary regularity of conduct (which are now often depended on as hopeful signs of true grace) while the heart is destitute of the knowledge of God the Saviour, and without one spark of real religion.” It is evident, not only from the report of friends, but also from a journal, which he kept in short hand, and which is entitled, “ The experience of a saved sinner,” that his mind was early occupied with religious concerns. The following words are prefixed to the journal, dated January 9, 1777, “ I have wrote an account of the way and manner in which the Lord began his work upon my soul, and how he carried it on to this present time, in a small tract, which may be found amongst my papers.” This must relate to what had happened before he was nineteen years of age.

His

* By Mr. Joseph Jenkins.

His usual attendance for public worship was at the established church, under the ministry of Mr. De Courcy, of whom he was a warm admirer, as well as an intimate acquaintance. But when the dispute about baptism began in Shrewsbury, in the year 1776, and in which so many pens were engaged, it seems to have excited much of his attention. Being educated in the principles of Pædobaptism, it does not appear, that before the commencement of this dispute, he had ever been led to suspect the validity of that practice. "The controversy, however," says the writer before quoted, "had that effect upon him, which it were to be wished, all books of controversy might have upon their readers, to engage him to study the Bible more diligently, and receive the truth from God himself." He has frequently related the following circumstance respecting that affair:—When his mind first began to waver upon the subject, the president of the academy, who appears to have been not a little concerned upon the occasion, put into his hands a very popular publication in defence of infant sprinkling, earnestly requesting him to read it attentively, and expressing his confidence that it would effectually establish his mind.—With this request he cheerfully complied, and having diligently perused the book, returned it to the gentleman, assuring him, that his mind was now *fully satisfied*; adding, however, that he supposed it would surprise him to hear, that it was of the *impropriety* of the practice contended for in it.

In consequence of this change in his sentiments, he was soon after baptized upon a profession of his faith, and added to a Baptist congregation at Shrewsbury, of which he continued a member upwards of five years.

Possessing promising abilities, he was occasionally called upon by the church to exercise his gifts sometimes among themselves, and sometimes in the adjacent villages;—and as the church had it ultimately in view to give him a call to the public work of the ministry, he was requested to preach before them a public discourse, which he

accordingly did, from 1 Pet. i. 5.—“ *Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation?*” A copy of this discourse is found amongst his short-hand papers, with the following words annexed, “ The above was delivered in the Baptist meeting-house, in Shrewsbury, June 24, 1781, being for the trial of the author’s abilities, and which being approved, he was, by that church, called to the work of the ministry.”

Towards the close of the same year, Mr. ECKING accepted an invitation from a few scattered individuals at Chester, to preach to them, and settled there with his family soon after. He had not been there more than a year, before a few persons were united together in a profession of the faith, over whom he was appointed pastor, in the month of April, 1783;—on which occasion he delivered “ The Confession of Faith,” which the reader will find in this volume subjoined to the Essays. But between the time of his coming to Chester and his ordination to this office, an important and remarkable change took place in his religious sentiments;—a change which, though it may be said to originate in a single point, yet is that point of such a peculiar nature, as ultimately to diffuse itself through the whole system of gospel doctrine, practice, and experience.

That a real and essential change took place in his sentiments at this time, might be easily demonstrated from a comparison of his manuscript discourses, and the journal of his experience, prior to this period, with the principles contained in the following essays. He had formerly the common popular notions of divine grace, and professed the doctrine of free justification, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, by faith without works;—but (as is too commonly the case) he did not in reality perceive the true grace of God in its freedom and suitableness to his

* It is but justice to mention, that his mind was first struck at hearing an occasional sermon preached at Chester, by Mr. Joseph Jenkins, of Wrexham.

his case, as a guilty, unqualified sinner ; nor did he understand how the work finished by the Son of God in his death, and declared to be accepted in his resurrection, was *alone* sufficient to relieve his mind, and give him immediate peace with God, without taking into his view some previous work of grace wrought in his heart, distinct from the knowledge of Christ, and as a necessary requisite to warrant his hope in him. This radical mistake, which is natural to the human heart, made the gospel appear to him in a conditional point of view, so that he expected no comfort from it, but through the medium of some favourable symptoms about himself. When he thought he discovered these, he was encouraged, upon that ground, to trust in Christ, as having now a better opinion of himself ; but when these favourable symptoms disappeared, his hopes sunk, his mind was distressed, and he could find nothing in the gospel itself suited to relieve him. Thus his happiness and comfort partook of all the changes and fluctuations of its unsteady foundation, whilst the whole exercises of his mind turned upon a legal or self-righteous hinge. But when it pleased the Lord to draw his attention to the divine evidence, beaming in the gospel, of the *perfection* and *sufficiency* of the obedience of the Son of God to justify the ungodly—its *suitableness* in all respects to the case of helpless, perishing sinners,—and particularly its immediate *nearness* and absolute *freeness* to the very worst of mankind, who can find no good thing *in themselves* to warrant their claim, but every thing the reverse—then his mind was immediately relieved ; he was delivered from a spirit of bondage, and filled with all joy and peace in believing, abounding in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for now he found all his salvation and all his desire, simply in what the gospel testifies of Christ.

That glorious truth which was now become the delight and happiness of his own soul, gave a new turn and refreshing savour to his discourses from the pulpit, and invigorated him in the discharge of the duties of his office.

“ It raised him up,” as he said, “ from that state of barrenness and desertion in his own soul, as well as from that leaning to himself, through which he was in doubt, whether he should have been able to preach another sermon.”

The important difference which he now perceived between the commonly-received doctrines, and the apostolic gospel, in its primitive simplicity, freeness and glory, made him resolve to publish his sentiments to the world. Accordingly, in the year 1784, the following performance made its first appearance;—and his design therein, as he himself informs us in the preface, was, “ to recommend the disallowed gospel as the **ONE THING NEEDFUL**; as that alone which can give peace at the last, and land a sinner safe and happy on the heavenly shore.”

The opposition which the author met with, on account of this publication, was such as an attentive reader might reasonably expect. Several of his former intimate associates in the ministry, and who had professed the highest regard for him, raised the greatest outcry of **HERESY** against it. Whatever reason Mr. ECKING might have had for affirming, in the introduction to the *Essay on Experience*, that modern *Catholic Charity* “ has it in her nature to persecute the friends of truth, even unto strange cities,” it is certain that experience, in this case, had no tendency to alter his opinion : For it is well known, that some, who value themselves much upon the liberality of their minds, and their catholic charity, and who, under a specious semblance of moderation and candour, offer a comprehension, from which none seem excluded, were nevertheless amongst his most zealous opposers, and manifested in their conduct towards him the greatest disingenuity. Justice to the truth for which he contended, required that he should not pass these things altogether unnoticed. He wrote a letter to one of this stamp, from whose character for catholicism, and eminence among his fraternity, a different conduct might have been expected. The following is an extract of it :—“ By what kind of penetration, Sir, could you perceive that I had re-
fined

finer my sentiments into rank Sandemanianism, when you seriously declared to more than one of your friends, that you had not read the book, nor would do it at present, if you did at all?—The essays I have published contain what I believe to be the truth, as it is in Jesus, and (without the fear of man) I hope, in the fear of God, steadily to maintain them, in opposition to every error which affects them. But if you, or any other person, will point out to me, wherein they stand opposed to the scriptures, I shall attentively consider what is said; and this will better become persons of your character, than to wrap up your mind in prejudice, and, sheltered behind the walls of fancied orthodoxy, to pour out volleys of absurd assertions, instead of scripture proofs, and fair argument.”

Mr. ECKING did not survive the publication of the Essays more than 8 months; his indisposition, which began, with a severe cold, terminated in a putrid fever. On the Lord's day, Jan. 16, 1785, he preached in the forenoon from John xv. 12. “*This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you.*” And in the afternoon, from Psalm cii. 16. 17. “*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.*”—On the afternoon of that day, his hoarseness increased to such a degree, that it was painful for him to speak, so that he was constrained to decline preaching in the evening, as was usual to him. During the remainder of that week he gradually grew worse; though he attended his school, as usual, and on Saturday morning went into his study to prepare for preaching next day, though much against the inclination of his friends. The passage of scripture he had fixed his attention upon, was Acts xi. 23. “*Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.*” Upon this subject, as usual, he wrote his thoughts;—but this discourse he was prevented from delivering, for his indisposition increasing, and an apothecary being called in, he was immediately ordered

ordered to his bed, and though the utmost attention was paid him, by a very respectable physician, yet so rapidly did his disorder proceed, as entirely to baffle the utmost power of medicine.

In a few days, being apprehensive of his approaching dissolution, he called together the church, and took his last, solemn, affectionate, and comfortable farewell of them ; told them he was going to the arms of Jesus, and that he hoped, ere long, to welcome them all there. The chief thing he dwelt upon, was, the contempt and scorn which he foresaw would attend their attachment to the truth. He took great pains to reconcile their minds to this, and with much earnestness exhorted them to “ hold fast the truth,” adding, “ *the truth is great, and will support you.*”

After this interview he enjoyed but sparingly the undisturbed exercise of his thinking powers ; yet an interval scarcely returned, in which he did not gladden the hearts of those around him, by the joyful manner in which he spoke of the consolations of the gospel ; and, on the 5th of February, he closed his days, in the 27th year of his age, exchanging a state of warfare and trial for the blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord.

In stature Mr. ECKING was about the middle size, slender, and very active ; his complexion swarthy, his countenance grave and sedate, and a just index of his mind.— In conversation, particularly after the alteration in his religious sentiments, he was chearful and lively, yet was it happily seasoned with incorruptness, gravity, and sincerity. His imagination was warm and active ; and he possessed a talent for poetical composition, which cultivation (had his days been prolonged) might have raised to some degree of excellence. Many of his juvenile pieces may be found in *The Gospel Magazine*, a periodical work edited by the celebrated Mr. Loplady, with his signature S.—E-k—g affixed to them, about the years 1778 and 1779.

His daily employment was the education of youth.— His school at Chester consisted of about half a dozen
boarders,

boarders, and about twenty day scholars, to whom he paid unremitted attention ; and for discharging the important duties of which, few persons were better qualified. His discourses from the pulpit were very animated and interesting ;—and his manner of preaching bore a great resemblance to that of his writing in the Essays ; for when he opened up the doctrine contained in a passage, he generally took occasion to point out to his hearers, how it stood opposed to the current doctrine of the day. He appears to have enjoyed much happiness in his pastoral capacity, and in the few connected with him. In a letter to the writer of this account (then at London,) dated January 18th, 1784, he says, “ We go on very comfortably ; both minister and people desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Three persons have been added since you went, and as many more will soon be baptized to that end. But we do not take the most effectual method to have what is called *a flourishing church* ;—yet if but two or three are united together in the *one hope*, loving and living upon the *precious truth*, however poor, mean and despised they may be, I shall think myself authorised to call them *a flourishing church*.”

How affectionate he was as a husband, how tender as a parent, how pleasant and amiable as a friend and companion, will long be remembered by those who enjoyed an intimacy with him. His domestic connections he regarded with peculiar tenderness —In the letter above quoted, he says, “ I have had some trials in Providence, since I saw you ;—my dear little boy was taken from me by the small pox, in September last. I hardly ever knew any trial in comparison of that ; but it becomes me to *be still*, and to hold my peace. He who presides over the affairs of the world cannot be mistaken in any thing he does ;—nor will he do any thing but what shall work, together with his other dispensations, to promote his own glory, and his people’s present and eternal good. It is a joyful reflection, however, to me, that *of such is the Kingdom of Heaven* ;

Heaven ; and therefore, my love to him should cause me to be glad."

His unremitted diligence in the various duties of his office and calling, will appear from the following brief detail of a week's employment. On the Lord's day he preached three times, attended his school the five succeeding days ;—and on Saturday spent almost the whole day in his study. And here it is worth noticing, that though he preached without notes, yet his discourses were pretty fully written down in short hand, the preceding day.—Besides what has already been mentioned, he held a conversation-meeting with his people, at his own house, on Tuesday evenings, preached a public discourse on Wednesday night, held a public prayer meeting on Friday night ; and visited his flock, at their own houses, as occasion required. And when we take into view, that it was amidst such a multiplicity of labours he composed the following Essays, it is not so much to be wondered at, that some defects and inaccuracies are to be found in them, as that they have so many excellencies. The great and leading principles contained in them are admirable, *viz.* That Christ is held forth, in the word of God, as the sure, immediate, and only foundation of hope, for guilty, perishing sinners, as such—That no inherent qualification is required, as previously necessary to a sinner's believing and hoping in Christ—That no *saving* change, nor any *true* principle of grace is wrought in his heart, before he believes in Christ, as a free and all-sufficient Saviour, suited to his case, as a sinner—And that all true peace of conscience, Christian experience, and real holiness in heart or life, originate in this faith of the Son of God, and must constantly be supported and influenced by it. Those who relish these great truths, will easily pardon a few occasional mistakes in the author's attempt to elucidate them.

Though Mr. ECKING was but a short time engaged in the pastoral office, yet it served to convince him, that it was essentially necessary to the welfare of a church, to
adhere

adhere strictly to the exercise of that discipline which the Lord Jesus himself hath instituted. He has frequently been heard deeply to lament the little attention paid to this important matter, by those societies who profess to copy the example of the apostolic churches; and there is no reason to doubt, that, had his life been prolonged, he would have attempted a reformation in many parts of the church order. But the Sovereign Disposer of all things saw meet to prevent his putting these designs into execution, by calling him to Himself.

POSTSCRIPT

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

From the preceding account it will be inferred by the reader, that Mr. ECKING must have left behind him copies of a considerable number of Sermons, which he had preached during the course of his ministry at Chester.—The intimation of this fact, in the last edition of the Essays, has induced several persons who esteem the author's writings, to express their wishes of being gratified with the publication of them. It should be remembered, however, that he wrote them in *short hand*, and in a system, too, which is at present not much in use. The publisher of the present edition, considers himself fortunate in having been taught that system by Mr. ECKING himself, because it has not only given him an opportunity since his death, of refreshing his recollection by a re-perusal of many excellent discourses which it had been his happiness to hear him personally deliver from the pulpit, but also of gratifying the wishes of those who are friendly to the author's views of christianity, by submitting some of them to public inspection. In the execution of this pleasing task,
he

he is not insensible of the delicate ground on which he treads. He has had frequent opportunities of seeing with regret, the just fame and reputation of the dead, in his opinion, considerably lessened by the injudicious conduct of their surviving friends, in giving to the public such parts of their writings, as the authors, if living, would have been anxious to conceal. He is conscious that his departed friend had no intention of submitting to public view these sermons, and the respect he owes his memory on the one hand, with his desire of gratifying the wishes of many, on the other, has occasioned a struggle in his breast which has been for some time of doubtful conflict. To the latter he has at length yielded, by printing as an Appendix, to what has already more than once met the public eye, a few of the author's sermons. In the selection of them, he has not been directed by any consciousness of superior excellency over others which are yet unpublished. His object has been chiefly to exhibit a fair specimen of the author's style and manner of preaching, which he is aware the partiality of friendship may have led him to over-rate. He has no hesitation in stating as his humble opinion, that in the disposition of his subjects of discourse, and in a clear and scriptural elucidation of them, Mr. ECKING's talents were of a superior order, though he is constrained to allow, that every part is not filled up with that ability which would have marked them, had he himself prepared them for the press. Nevertheless, such as they now are, he flatters himself that they will be perused with satisfaction, and contribute in some small measure, to the promotion of those ends which the author had much at heart, in delivering them from the pulpit ;—the instruction of the ignorant, and the edification and establishment of the disciples of Christ. Should it be his felicity to find, what is now only submitted as a specimen, sanctioned by the public approbation, he may be induced, at a future period, to follow it up with an additional volume of the author's sermons, on important and interesting subjects.

PREFACE.

IT has been observed, that, in controversies about religion, most parties, however wide in their sentiments, have claimed the authority and countenance of scripture for their respective notions. Some, on this account, have been disposed to fix the charge of inconsistency upon the sacred records; and others, for the same reason, have thought it necessary to have some certain rules to interpret scripture by. Hence traditions, church-authority, creeds, and confessions of faith, have been multiplied in great abundance, and which are in general thought better calculated to guard against heresy than that book which is appealed to by all heretics.—The church of Rome has deservedly been held up to public ridicule, for her pretensions to infallibility, and for keeping the people in ignorance, by prohibiting the reading of the scriptures; happy day that was, therefore, which began the dawn of *Reformation*. But does it not lead us back to ROME, to condemn *free enquiry*, from the fear of innovation? What essential difference is there between having the scriptures wholly kept from our eyes, and suffering our understanding, judgment, and conscience to be limited by articles, church-authority, &c.? Do not these limitations tend to shut us up in as gross darkness, as our ancestors were covered with, by receiving papal tradition in the room of divine revelation?—The preaching of Fulgentio at Venice, on Pilate's question, *What is truth?* is not foreign to our purpose. He told his hearers that at last, after many researches, he had found it out, and holding out a New Testament, said that it was in his hand; but he put it in

pocket, and coldly added, "*The book is prohibited.*" What difference would there have been had he said, you may read the book, but its true meaning is prohibited? But what has been the consequence of introducing this method of preventing heresies and schisms? Plainly this (not to say any thing about extirpation), many have, as it were insensibly, been led to make tradition and church-authority their *faith*; and have thus become the dupes of superstition, while they have professed to be guided by the word of God! Yet since all spirits must be tried by the scriptures—since all true church authority must be founded there—and since if any man speak not according to the form of sound words recorded there, it is because there is no light in him, where can Christians appeal but to the scriptures? These, they are well assured, are able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

The writer of the following pages might tell his reader of his connections with those who are reputed Orthodox; but as one justly observes, "Orthodoxy, like almost all martial terms of controvertists, is a very vague, equivocal word.—In its original and true import, it signifies a *right belief*; but, such is the fate of language! in one latitude it means a belief of one thing, in another the belief of another thing, quite contrary. In these Essays, let it stand for what Paul calls the *belief of the truth*—not the belief of the truth as it is in this creed, or in that, or in any other, but *as it is in Jesus.*"—He presents them to the reader's serious attention, submissively and impartially to be tried by the heavenly oracles, in their most simple and obvious meaning, comparing spiritual things with spiritual; assuring him, that he wishes them to have no other influence than what they may have borrowed from thence. His grand design is to recommend the disallowed gospel

as the ONE THING NEEDFUL ; as that alone which can give peace at the last, and land a sinner safe and happy on the heavenly shore. The glorious gospel, in its primitive simplicity, freeness, and glory, stands opposed, on the one hand, to self-righteousness and self-dependance in all its forms ; and, on the other, to carnal confidence, worldly mindedness, and self-indulgence : for while it makes ample provision for the most wretched circumstances a sinner can be in, by laying a sufficient foundation for his hope in the Redeemer's finished work ; it exhibits the most powerful incentives to true godliness, and makes the keeping of Christ's commands essential to the Christian character. On this account it is expected that the *self-righteous* and the *licentious* (however ambiguously they hold those tenets which lead them to self-confidence and self-indulgence), will be much disgusted with what they find in the following pages : and the writer frankly acknowledges that he has not designed, in a single line, to please either of them ; but on the contrary has endeavoured to set forth his sentiments in such a light, as to stand in direct opposition to their notions of christianity. The doctrines opposed are mostly stated in the very words of some who have written in favour of them, but without mentioning the names of the authors ; the reason of which is, that *persons* or particular *parties* are not attacked, but *errors*, let them be found with what persons or parties they may. The same method has been occasionally observed, in regard to those who have maintained the doctrines herein stated ; and when the reader is referred to an author's name, it is not with the least design, either to rest the sentiment upon his credit, or screen the writer from censure, under covert of another's reputation : for though he highly esteems their writings, who have been valiant for the truth, yet if ten thousand writers, in the highest reputation for orthodoxy, could be produced in confirmation of what is here said, unless they were prefaced with, *Thus saith the Lord*, they will only stand as so many insignificant cyphers in the esteem of those who have *an ear to hear what the spirit*

saith unto the churches. On the other hand, if the reasoning of these essays be found to accord with the *word of truth*, it will be a very small circumstance with discerning Christians, though the wise, the learned, or the seemingly religious, should unite to reprobate the book, and load its author with reproach; for what are the highest sounding names among men, to the name and authority of CHRIST? And what should Christians fear, though their faith and practice provoke the contempt of nations? Would any strange thing happen to them if it should be so? Nay verily! for so persecuted they the prophets and apostles, which have gone before them.

The writer has nothing to say in favour of the *manner* in which the work is executed. He makes no pretension to accuracy of language, or refinement of stile; but is conscious of many deficiencies in each of these respects. All he aims at is to convey his meaning, in the most simple and intelligible manner he can. If he has made known what he intended, by what he has declared, the *summit* of his attempt, as to *manner*, is obtained.—If it should please the great Prophet of the church, who alone can teach to profit, to make use of these hints to convince any of the error of their way, or to confirm the souls of the disciples, the author's labours will be richly rewarded: But if, after comparing what is written with the Bible, that infallible standard of truth, any should be disposed to condemn it as *heretical*, he has no higher court to appeal to. He is persuaded, in his own mind, that the remarks are grounded upon the evidence of Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles; but is very willing to allow, what indeed every man has an equal right to, the right of private judgment; and can say no more than, *I speak as to wise men*, JUDGE YE *what I say*, and let EVERY MAN be fully persuaded in his own mind.

ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY FIRST, ON DIVINE GRACE.

OF THE NATURE, PURPOSE, MANIFESTATION, WORD, SPIRIT,
AND PRINCIPLE OF GRACE, AS SET FORTH IN
SCRIPTURE LIGHT.

SECTION I.

OF THE NATURE OF GRACE IN GENERAL.

THE doctrine maintained by the apostles of CHRIST, is distinguished from every scheme framed by the wisdom of men, in that it is a system of *pure grace*. They asserted, that man must stand before his Maker either upon the footing of the *law of works*; or the *gospel of grace*. Upon the former ground they fully demonstrate, that no flesh living can be accepted, because the *whole world* is become *guilty* before God, and so justly condemned by his law; therefore they assert, that if any of the fallen race of Adam are saved, it must be by sovereign *grace alone*. In the apostles' days, however, many asserted with them that salvation was of grace, who yet meant something thereby, very different from the obvious sense of their words; and it is hardly to be questioned, that the greatest part of those who call themselves christians, in our day, will affirm in like manner, that we are saved by *grace*; while yet, when they come

to explain themselves upon the point, few will be found to understand the term, in the sense in which it is plain the apostles used it.—The inspired witnesses, aware of the errors which many ran into in their own day, about *grace*; and also of the more general opposition that would be made against it after their decease; declared themselves upon the subject, with the greatest precision. Thus when Peter had written upon the truth of the gospel, he tells those who had received his doctrine, *this is the TRUE grace of God wherein ye stand*, 1 Peter, v. 12. It was Paul's peculiar consolation that the Colossians knew the grace of GOD IN TRUTH; Col. i. 6. that is, as opposed to every falsehood, or counterfeit of it: they had been taught *the truth as it is in Jesus*, and so had received the grace of God in incorruption. And it was his grief to find, that the Galatians had *fallen from grace*; Gal. v. 4. that is, if we attend to what he says in the beginning of that epistle, they had received a *perverted* gospel, which led them to entertain wrong notions of the *true grace of God*. In his epistle to the Hebrews, he exhorts professing believers to *Look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God*, &c. Heb. xii. 15.

Now as every one chuses to affix his own notion to the words of scripture which he has occasion to use; and seeing that an error about *grace* is, of all others, the most dangerous, yea the very source of all other errors, under a profession of religion, and must therefore prove fatal, if not perceived and corrected; it is needful that we should search diligently into the *true* nature of that grace which is revealed, and by which alone we can be saved.

GRACE, in the scriptures of truth, stands in direct opposition to *works* of every kind, and every degree; so that it is utterly impossible there

there should be any, even the least mixture of the one with the other; for such is the purity of *grace*, and so opposite is its nature to human *works*, that a coalition would destroy its very being; grace would be no more grace. This appears plain from Paul's writings, Rom. xi. 6. *And if of grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work.* If this passage does not state the most glaring opposition between works and grace, it is past a possibility to make a contrast. They, therefore, who attempt to join them, to the same end and for the same purpose, even though it might be under the most plausible pretence of securing the *interests of holiness*, are under a fatal mistake in the most essential points of the gospel, and as far from standing in *the true grace of God* as the east is from being joined with the west. *For to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt*, Rom. iv. 4.

And here let it be carefully observed, that the grace of God stands in opposition, not only to those legal works, by which the Jews went about to establish their own righteousness, but to *all works* whatever, wrought by the creature. Whether they be works of the law, or works of the gospel; exercises of the heart, or actions of the life; done while we are in a state of nature, or after we are born of God; they are all, and every of them, *equally* set aside, as being either the cause, condition, qualification, or medium, either in the purpose, manifestation, or bestowment of grace, in any of its abounding blessings*; in

* It must be noticed, that the author is here treating of the *nature* of divine grace, and therefore distinguishes it even from its *effects* upon men's hearts and lives, which in scripture are sometimes called *grace*.—Ed.

order that every *shadow* of glorying, should be for ever cut off from the creature, and God in Christ receive the *unrivalled* honour of salvation in all its parts.

Divine grace, therefore, is the *free favour*, the undeserved compassion of Jehovah, through Christ Jesus, to the *absolutely wretched*; and includes the bestowment of all spiritual and eternal blessings.—The properties of divine grace are, *sovereign, rich, and free*; that is, *sovereign*, as it bestows its favours *where* and on *whomsoever* it pleases;—*rich*, as being *exceeding abundant* in all manner of supplies, extended to the utmost necessities of the poor and wretched;—and *free*, because not conferred upon the account of any inviting qualifications, nor rewarding him that willeth or runneth, but, in *all* its bestowments, wearing the pleasing appearance of *reigning mercy*. In short, grace confers the greatest blessings and highest favours upon the most undeserving amongst the sons of men, according to the *good pleasure* of the divine goodness.—The scriptures always preserve these ideas, whenever the term *grace* is mentioned.—Thus the *gospel* is called *the grace of God*, because it reveals the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, and opens up the eternal purposes of sovereign grace and abounding mercy in him. If the *new creature* be at any time designed by this term, it still preserves the same endearing signification. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.—2 Cor. iv. 6. Titus iii. 4. 6. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*—2 Tim. i. 9. If acts of liberality or a good conversation, 2 Cor. viii.

viii. 7. be called grace, it directly leads our thoughts from the effect to the cause, 2 Cor. ix.

I shall close this section with the words one had occasion to use when giving cautions against the counterfeit grace. "The doctrine of *free grace* being so illustrious in the scriptures as not to be spoken against, they (the Arminians) will talk as high of it in *general terms* as any other, and tell us what great pretensions their doctrine hath to magnify *grace*, and that they design nothing more than the honour of that; when, indeed, *it is not grace*, but a contrary thing set up with that name: for, follow the stream either upward or downward, and as it arises from, so it all runs into, *advancement of self*."

SECTION II.

THE PURPOSE OF GRACE.

NOTHING is more capable of demonstration, if we take it for granted that the scriptures are the word of God, than that the *self-moved* good pleasure of Jehovah's *eternal purpose*, is the grand original source of all spiritual and eternal blessings: according as it is written, *Who hath saved us, and called us—according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*—The choice of the Mediator's person, in whom men should be blessed, and his fore-ordination to be the beginning of the new creation, was the effect of mere good pleasure and sovereign favour. *I will GIVE thee for a covenant to the people*, is the language of pure grace. In the eternal purpose, CHRIST stands

stands the first and chief elect. Hence the Father calls him *Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth*. HE is the first-born among many brethren in the household of faith, the family of heaven; the centre of Jehovah's delights amongst the sons of men. In him God is well pleased; and out of him, he is nothing but displeasure against sinners. Hence *the remnant according to the election of grace* are chosen *in him*; and unless this had been the case, there could have been no salvation.—That Jehovah's good pleasure was the *only* cause of a people being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and of grace being treasured up *in him*, by the divine decree, for the salvation and glorification of numberless sinners, is a *fact* which shines with the clearest lustre, and is demonstrated and confirmed in the oracles of unerring truth. Hence we read of *a remnant according to the election of grace*—of *predestination to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will*; which he had *purposed in himself*, &c. And it is equally plain from the same authority, that His original design in the appointment of Christ, &c. was *his own glory*,—the manifestation of his sovereignty, wisdom, justice, holiness, mercy, faithfulness, power, and truth.

But though this good pleasure of the divine goodness is so grand in its own nature, so full of divine sovereignty, so consistent with all the divine perfections, so infinitely worthy of HIMSELF to make known, that he is represented as delighting in the same before he gave birth to time, or existence to creatures; yet it is most disgusting to, and mortally hated by, the sons of pride, who think no reproaches too odious to cast upon it! But why is it so? Why should man reply against God? Why does the creature proceed so impiously, as to call the God that made him

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to his bar, and censure and condemn *his* conduct, who has a sovereign right to do according to his own pleasure in Heaven and Earth, without being subject to any one's inquiry into the reason of his procedure?

The true cause of this ungodly opposition is, that vain man would fain have some ground of glorying in *himself* before God; whereas the language of the bible is, *the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low: and the LORD ALONE shall be exalted.* It not only forbids creatures glorying in the divine presence, but strips them of all their fancied importance, and leaves them destitute of the least pretence to, or ground of, boasting. Hence the very sinews of human pride are cut; and every one that is saved enters the Kingdom of Heaven upon the same footing as a *little child*. But however this sublime truth is hated, traduced, and rejected by those who fancy themselves rich, and so stand in need of nothing; it will ever prove salutary to those who view themselves as poor and miserable; because towards such it wears the most encouraging, friendly, and smiling aspect: for, if rightly understood, the doctrine of divine sovereignty opens a door of hope, presents an all-sufficient relief to those who are justly condemned, and on the very verge of despair. The self-sufficient, like their prime leader, go about industriously to pervert this heavenly doctrine; for, though like him, they use scripture, and, in general terms, talk highly about the eternal purposes of grace; yet under that name, they set up a thing contrary in its nature to the *true grace of God*. Such are they who make the *cause* of the divine choice to salvation and eternal life, to centre in some *foreseen* works, pious desires, repentance, &c. But could we imagine that man appeared, in the fore-

fore-knowledge of God, as pure and holy as the angels who sinned not; yet if that were the *cause*, or, in any sense, the reason that influenced Jehovah to chuse them, though we might discover *faithfulness* and *justice* in the Almighty, when accomplishing his designs, we directly lose sight of *sovereign grace*. And though the signification of the term *grace* be twisted and turned by false criticism, to blind the eyes of the weak and unstable; yet an authority higher than human, warrants us to say, that if any, or all of the above-mentioned things be the *cause* of any being chosen to eternal life, *Grace is no more grace*. Yea, we may go further, and yet keep within the bounds of revealed truth. The eternal purpose of grace was not the *effect* of Jehovah's foreknowledge even of the spotless obedience, and perfect atonement of Christ. This is not the *cause* of everlasting love and the eternal purpose, but the *fruit and effect* thereof. John. iii. 16. Much less then would it comport with the scripture account of the eternal purpose, or the genuine signification of *grace*, to say, that foreseen works or any inward qualities whatever in the creature were the moving cause, or even the remotest medium of the divine choice.

Again; the supposition that any thing foreseen in the creature, influenced the divine choice, is opposed by that state which the word of God represents mankind universally to be in, and in which the divine prescience must have universally beheld them, *viz.* a state of sin, in which they lay polluted as an unclean thing, and obnoxious to the divine wrath; which it would be blasphemy to suppose, could draw out the love of the holy God, so could not be any reason of the divine approbation or choice. But the Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of truth who cannot err, makes void the hypothesis I am oppos-

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ing, when he tells us, that they who were *chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, and predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace; were dead in trespasses and sins, and by nature the children of wrath, even as others*, Eph. i. 4—6. chap. ii. 1—3. Thus he who searches the mind of God reports, and we know that his witness is true.

Further; it is contrary to the express declaration of the word, Rom. xi. 5, 6, where we are expressly taught, that the divine choice proceeds upon grace, in opposition to every notion of worthiness or desert whatever. We have not the liberty here, even of halving the matter, or adding the least grain of the one to the other, for even this cannot be done without destroying both. To say, therefore, that the divine choice is of grace, and yet to maintain that it has respect to works, under any form or notion that they can be conceived of, is to assert, in Paul's estimation, the most glaring contradiction that can possibly be thought of. I can compare it to nothing more fitly, than an attempt to prove that darkness is the *cause* of light.

Once more; it has been said that election is founded upon a foreknowledge of our *love*. But the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so that naturally we have no love to God in us; nor can we have any love to God's true character, until the sovereign, preventing grace of God, turn us from darkness to light; for till then, we are totally ignorant of the divine beauty. Paul sets the matter in its true light, Eph. ii. 4, 5, *But God, who is rich in mercy for HIS GREAT LOVE wherewith HE loved us, &c.* And another scripture saith, *Herein is love, NOT THAT WE*

LOVED GOD, *but that* HE LOVED US; And we love him BECAUSE HE FIRST *loved us*. So that it would seem, if credit is to be given to God's word, that the notion of foreseen love in us being the *cause* or medium of God's love to us, is a mere human fabrication, and without the shadow of foundation, in the scriptures.

Lastly; others who admit the eternal purpose, and deny either foreseen works or foreseen love to be the *cause* of it, nevertheless maintain, that it was formed upon the foreknowledge of our faith or believing. But the full force of this notion is invalidated by this single consideration, that faith comes as much of God's good pleasure and sovereign favour, as the eternal purpose itself. Divine faith is what no man naturally possesses; for we are all in unbelief. Faith is of the operation of God; the very verse which declares salvation to be of grace, shews that faith is not of ourselves, *it is the gift of God*. And the person who receives this precious favour, can no more account for its being given to him, in the behalf of Christ, to believe in his name, while others remain in unbelief, than he can tell whence the wind cometh, or whither it goeth. For however firmly a person may have believed, what he imagined was the gospel of Christ, when he truly knows, through divine teaching, what the gospel is, he will plainly discover that the Lord was found of him who sought not after him.

From this brief view of the eternal purpose of grace, it appears that divine sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and goodness, are united in the blessed decree of *him* whose council shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure; and though many have been more concerned about the creature's *liberty*, lest it should be infringed, than Jehovah's *sovereignty*, lest it should be limited,
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yet divine wisdom so directs the accomplishment of his purpose, that his chosen people are made willing in the day of his power; whilst all who eventually perish, do so with the utmost freedom of will: they chuse what their delight centers in; they love darkness rather than light.

To conclude this section; sovereignty is essential to DEITY. Sovereignty, directed by unerring wisdom, is the rule of *all* Jehovah's proceedings. The original *cause* of salvation, is the *self-moved purpose of divine grace*; and the *only cause* of any sinner's damnation is his *own voluntary wickedness, and unprovoked rebellion against God.*

SECTION III.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GRACE.

PAUL having spoken of the purpose of grace in Christ Jesus before the world began, tells us that it is *now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.* And that, *Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the Devil.* Our attention is hereby led to the entrance of sin into the world. Sin is the cause of that death which God our Saviour came to abolish. Sin first originated in Satan: his sin was *pride*, which it has been thought, (from John viii, 44), arose in his high mind from supposing it an indignity to *him*, that the human nature should be the medium of God's communion with his creatures, and so *he* left his own

habitation. From Christ and his Apostles comparing those who are enemies to, and corrupters of the gospel, to the angels that fell, and declaring, that those who apostatize, fall into the condemnation of the Devil; it seems not unlikely that this was the case. However that may be, we are at no uncertainty when the first manifestation of sovereign grace was made to man; and this more directly claims our attention.

The word informs us that *man* was made lord of this lower creation, yet himself framed to live in absolute dependance on his Maker, as the author and giver of all things, and the sovereign of life and death; in the enjoyment of whose favour he was completely happy, and had assurance that he should remain so, while his dependance upon, and obedience to the word of his Sovereign, were preserved inviolable. His natural knowledge of God then gave him comfort, while conscious of having done the things that were well pleasing in his sight. He did not stand in need of any different revelation of God, to complete that happiness which he was framed to enjoy; so that no intimation was, or consistently could be given him, in his state of innocence, of the purpose of grace. But when, through affecting *independence*, he became a *transgressor*, and so deserving of the threatened death;—when *defiled*, and so incapable of communion with God;—when nothing but awful, aggravated guilt flew in his face,—nothing but shame, terror, and almost despair filled and harassed his conscience;—when, in consequence of this, his former knowledge of God heightened, instead of allaying the storm within, so that nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment was before him;—when emptiness, vanity, confusion, disorder, and wrath were brought upon the whole creation;—when nothing from with-

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out Jehovah could move him to suspend the execution of the threatening, far less be a motive to manifest his goodness;—*then* was the time that infinite wisdom chose, for *grace*, in all its rich aboundings, to make its welcome appearance; that its true nature and design might appear, and that it might be seen upon the earth, that sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and mercy were in the purpose of grace perfectly united. *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*, were the blessed words that opened the grand mystery which had been hid with God.—By this glorious system of grace the wisdom of God in the permission of sin was manifested, and the honour of the divine government in the destruction of Satan's kingdom—the abolishment of death—the establishment of the divine law—and the eternal salvation of the elect—are infallibly secured.

The way Jehovah has been pleased to make known his designs of grace in its various stages, is declared by the Aposle Paul, Heb. i. 1. *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manncrs, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son—who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.*—Hence we see, that though there has been but one way of salvation since the fall, and that according to the purpose of God in Christ, yet the manifestation of it was given at sundry times, and in divers manners.—I shall not attempt here to trace at large, the various openings of the mystery of grace, previous to the appearance of God our Saviour, but only observe, that Paul ranks them under the general name of the *old covenant*: by which I understand, that temporary dispensation, which

God gave to the fathers, which under the veil of types, &c. represented the blessings of the divine purpose, and were patterns of heavenly things, to remain in use until the SEED should come. It appears from Gen. iii. 21, and chap. iv. 4, that sacrifices were made immediately after the fall, which, without doubt, were intended to set forth the great atonement, through faith in which Abel's sacrifice was accepted, Heb. xi. 4. Not to say any thing particularly about Noah, and the manifestation of grace to him under certain signs, such as the *Ark*, the *Rainbow*, &c. it may be observed, that the nature of this covenant was more fully revealed to Abraham, and the blessings of grace which it represented, more clearly manifested to him, Gen. chap. xii. 3. xxii. 6—19, John viii. 56, Gal. iii. 8, the Apostle Paul also confirms this thought, Heb. ix. 15. *And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called, might receive the promise of eternal inheritance,* see v. 26. The one atoning sacrifice of Christ extended itself to the transgression of Adam, and to all their transgressions, who believed in the promised seed to the time that the sacrifice was made at Calvary, with as much virtue as it does to those who through grace believe in him now, as having finished his work, and received the great reward thereof. Some are inclined to think that the *old covenant* began, when the Lord took Israel by the hand, and led them forth out of Egypt; and perhaps there is reason from the scripture to think so: though without doubt, under the ministry of Moses, the former signs were renewed, greatly augmented, and formed into a complete system of ceremonial worship. The sacrifices in general—the cities of refuge—the

the year of jubilee—the land of Canaan—the kings, prophets, and priests in Israel—the Temple, its utensils, and every part of the worship thereof (of which things we cannot now speak particularly) were all shadows of good things to come; but after having answered their end, decayed, waxed old, and then vanished away. But I have chiefly to speak of grace and truth as it came by Jesus Christ. And indeed it is only in reference to this that we can behold grace manifested under the *old covenant*, for we are not to imagine that any thing pertaining thereunto could take away sin; nor yet that the privileges of the temporary covenant gave any right to that of the new and everlasting. *The promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith: for if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void and the promise (that all nations of the earth should be blessed in Christ) made of none effect.*

GOD—*hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.* And indeed only the Son could make known the mystery which lay hid with God; for no man hath seen God at any time;—the *only begotten Son*, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. It will not be amiss here, to take some notice of the person of the Son, by whom the eternal purpose is made manifest. He is frequently stiled *the Son of Man*, which points out that he is properly a man; and when this title is given him in the New Testament, it leads us to think of him as in this respect naturally inferior to the angels, and not a creature existing before any other creatures were made, as some most absurdly suppose, Heb. i. 1. ch. ii. 14. Yet under this title we are not to suppose him begotten of man; otherwise he could not have been called that

HOLY THING. Concerning this important matter, the word of God thus teaches. *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son—and Mary said unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered, and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: THEREFORE also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* By the Holy Ghost coming upon the Virgin, &c. our attention is led to what is written in the Psalms concerning him. *A body hast thou prepared me.* This body was set apart for Jehovah as his own, so that God was manifested in the flesh: for though Jesus was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death; yet he has a name above every name, and all the angels of God are commanded to worship him. The prophet foretold, that he who should make his appearance upon the earth, in the fulness of time, was in fact no less a person than *The mighty God! the everlasting Father! the Lord God! the God of the whole earth, &c.!*—Is. ix, 6, chap. xl. 10, chap. liv. 5. John also tells us, that the Word that was in the beginning with God—*was God*; so that when *Immanuel* made his appearance, he scrupled not to say, *I am the Son of God*; by which he meant the same as when he said, *I and my Father are one. The Father is in me, and I in him.* In this sense the Jews understood him, and counted what he said blasphemy, for which they put him to death: and in the resurrection of Christ we see the Father, who was appealed to on both sides, interposing and deciding the controversy; by which he cleared Jesus from the charge of blasphemy
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when he *made himself God*. He is therefore the living and true God in human nature, and as *Immanuel* he is a true and perfect image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. As the Christ of God, it hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, and those who knew him in the days of his flesh, beheld him *full of grace and truth*, John i, 14. In agreement with this we are told, that the *grace of God was upon him*, and *grace is poured into his lips*. Moses speaking of him as the great prophet who should reveal the father's grace, says, *HIM shall ye hear*; and that he was well qualified to open the grand mystery, will appear if we collect what has been already hinted of him. He is truly and properly man, and so can hold converse with us, without his terrors making us afraid. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and so a fit person for Jehovah to enter into covenant with, and communicate his mind unto. He is above all, God blessed for evermore, and so possessed of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and being all this in unity of person, he could stand between God and man—and of course, all that he did, or spoke, must be filled with infinite dignity and virtue.

Having seen that Christ is the only person in earth or heaven, worthy to open the divine purpose, and accomplish the same, let us see wherein sovereign grace appears in the manifestation of God our Saviour.—God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; and this unspeakable gift is the proper expression of that love, with which God loved his people before the world began; for that love being infinite, the full expression of it could not have been declared, but by a gift of infinite worth, so that
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unless Jesus were an infinite person, the gift would not have been expressive of the abundant grace; but the gift of Christ is equal to the Father's superlative love: yet how great the grace and the expression of it are, no finite being can tell. We can only say, *God so loved the world!* &c. and herein is love! yet since it is so manifested, as that we may, in part, perceive it, let us take a view thereof, in the mirror of truth. Jehovah gave his Son, his only Son, his well-beloved Son—gave him for a covenant to a people deserving his wrath—gave him up to the sword of justice in their place—and, what is most astonishing, himself commanded that sword to delay no longer, but awake and strike the awful blow! yea, it even pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief! Whether the divine sovereignty, justice, or grace, shone most glorious in this awful transaction, who can tell? Consider further, that the persons on whom this infinite blessing was bestowed, were enemies to God by wicked works—rebels against the divine Majesty—persons who had wickedly trampled upon his authority—at awful enmity in their hearts against his government—universally defiled with sin, and of consequence infinitely odious to divine purity—a *mass of uncleanness*. What shall we say to these things? Was God under any obligation to manifest such abundant kindness? Far otherwise: his law, which man had broken, was holy, so that the wisdom, holiness, faithfulness, and honor of God, yea, all his adorable perfections, stood engaged to punish the transgressor with destruction. Nothing therefore but pure sovereignty and free grace could be the moving cause of such compassion. This Paul had an eye to when he said, *But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even while we were dead*
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in sins, &c. How infinitely above the utmost extent of what is called mercy among men, does the divine good pleasure rise!—Again, as the riches of grace appear in the Father's unspeakable gift, and considering the objects upon whom its favours are conferred, so also in the astonishing humiliation of the Son of God. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Unparalleled condescension this! That *he* who inhabited the praises of eternity—he who spake, and the universe rose into being—he who fills the sun with light, preserves the course of nature, stretches out his hand, and fills all living with food—he who appeared in tremendous glory at Sinai, and shall shortly ascend his great white throne to judgment—that *he* should become an infant of days—be brought forth in a stable, and laid in a manger, where oxen fed—should take the form of a servant—suffer hunger, thirst, and fatigue—be without a place to lay his head—and subject himself to cruel mockings, buffetings, and shameful spitting, and, to complete the strange scene, voluntarily yield up himself to his enemies—deny himself of his Father's smiles, which he valued more than life—make his soul a sacrifice for sin, and expire under the wrath of a sin-avenging God!—*What things are these!* Does any thing but mere good pleasure, grace altogether liberal and unmerited appear throughout the whole?

Let us now consider the character that Jesus sustained

sustained in his state of humiliation, and the benefits resulting to his people from his work.—The important office which the Son of God sustained was that of a SURETY, Heb. vii. 22. In order to this he was made under the law, and set by the Sovereign of Heaven in the law room and place of his people; to fulfil all righteousness in their behalf, and to satisfy justice in its utmost demands for their transgressions, *that God might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* The prophet Daniel very accurately states the surety's work in the following words, *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.* That our sins were imputed to the surety; that Jesus was substituted to be the sin-bearing and sin-atonement lamb, appears from such declarations as follow: *The Lord hath laid ON HIM the iniquity of US ALL. He was made sin FOR US. Himself bare OUR SINS in his own body on the tree. Through the eternal spirit he offered himself without spot unto God, and thereby put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* Thus *He poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sins of MANY, and made intercession FOR the transgressors.* But though our divine substitute placed himself in the lowest state of human wretchedness, and expired under the wrath of God; though he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; yet the third day he rose again, according to the scriptures; whereby it was fully demonstrated, that the work which he had declared *finished*, when he gave up the Ghost, was acceptable and well pleasing to God, was all-sufficient to deliver his people from death and the curse,—that he,

as our surety, was freed from those sins which had been charged upon him, having made full atonement for them,—being justified in the sight of the holy law.—declared to be the Son of God with power, and, as the reward of his obedience and sufferings, crowned with glory, as it is written, *Thou hast made him most blessed for ever : thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.*

It is generally allowed that Christ magnified the law and made it honorable, and so fulfilled all righteousness; and it is as plain that his obedience to the law, was done in his people's room, or as their surety. If this be not true, it will be hard to find a tolerable gloss to put upon that scripture which informs us, that *by the obedience of one many are made righteous.* But this momentous truth does not go a begging for its evidence, nor does it rest simply upon one passage of holy writ, but is intermingled with the whole of Revelation. Paul, in describing *The righteousness of Faith*, shows, that it is imputed for righteousness to every one that believeth.—*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4. *He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21, see also Rom. iii. 21—26, chap. iv. 3—6, 22—25. Unless this be admitted, there can appear no propriety, beauty, nor glory in that admirable name which the surety bears, and which is the glory of his church, viz. THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, Jer. xxiii. 6. And their claim would be void, who, in the triumphs of faith, say, IN THE LORD HAVE I RIGHTEOUSNESS and strength. If this sacred truth was built upon no better foundation, than the highest witness of men, we might fear the wrath of men against it; but it rests upon a basis infinitely more secure, than

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even earth's foundations; for *Their Righteousness is of me*, SAITH THE LORD.

Thus we have seen that the incarnation, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the glory that followed, together with the declared end thereof, is the eternal purpose of grace unfolded, *even the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints*. Many of the works of men are beautiful; all the divine works are glorious; but the Saviour's works of obedience and suffering, exceed in glory. Here the ETERNAL ceases, as it were, to be invisible: the veil is rent, and the most holy place thrown wide open; for in the cross of Christ the brightest exhibition is made of every divine perfection; the sovereignty and riches of divine mercy and grace—the glory of the divine justice, or the infinite opposition of the Deity to sin; in a word, infinite wisdom, veracity, and power, with every other glorious attribute, unite in honouring the holy law, setting forth the evil of sin, destroying the works of Satan, and completely saving the chosen of God.

SECTION IV.

THE WORD OF GRACE; OR, GRACE IN ITS PUBLICATION.

✓ NOTHING can be more grand, and becoming the sovereign of heaven, than that awful view of eternal power given us in the following words: LET THERE BE LIGHT—AND THERE WAS LIGHT! Thus by the word of the Lord were the heavens

heavens made, and all the host of them by the spirit of his mouth; for he spake and it was—he commanded, and it stood fast. This *divine person*, who spoke all things into existence, and who upholds all things by his power, is called **THE WORD OF GOD**, Rev. xix. 13, and in reference to the purpose of grace and its publication, he is called a **PROPHET**, Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19 the forerunner of this great prophet testifies, that *He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God*; and the faithful and true witness himself declares, *The words which ye hear of me are not mine, but the Father's that sent me; he gave me commandment what I should speak*. And addressing the Father, he says, *I have given them* (his apostles) *the words which thou gavest me*. Now the scriptures of truth are the words of this great prophet; for though but a small part of them were spoken by him, while he tabernacled upon earth; yet it was by his Spirit that holy men of old were inspired to write, 1 Peter i. 11. 2 Peter i. 21. And the same blessed spirit was, after Christ's ascension, made to rest upon his apostles, under whose inspiration they spake *none other things than Moses and the prophets did say should come*. The scriptures then being given by inspiration of God, are a perfect record of his mind, and the only unerring guide to the knowledge of him the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. So that it is a vain thing to pretend to, or expect any other knowledge of *Grace*, than what the word of truth publishes. Hence it is called *Word of Grace—the Gospel of Grace—the Truth*, &c. and all that are of the truth hear Christ's voice. Such will not be surprized to see these heavenly oracles perverted; it will not appear a strange thing to them, to behold some turn the grace of God into lasciviousness—others with cunning craftiness, lying in

wait to deceive—others changing the truth of God into a lie—and many, following their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of; they rather receive hereby a notable confirmation of the truth of the scriptures, which foretold, that many would deny Christ, under a profession of his name.

I shall here therefore give a brief view of some systems, out of many, which, while they pretend to have their foundations in the word of God, answer no other end, than to eclipse and pervert the truth as it is in Jesus; and so, to decoy and ruin precious souls: and then attempt to state the true nature, glory, sufficiency, and freeness of the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

It might be observed by the way, that the variety of doctrines, and the diversity of sentiments, prevailing in the professing world, are by no means to be considered as arising from any different *end*, that their inventors and propagators have in view; but from the different *ways* in which they hope to attain the one common end. Nothing less than happiness, even everlasting happiness, is the grand end proposed; and every one is ready to think his own scheme the nearest and most eligible way thereunto. Those among professing Christians, who have the highest reputation for virtue, benevolence, candour, and decorum, seek to obtain the favour of the Most High, by their own obedience; and it must be acknowledged, that this plan claims the preference of any modern scheme, which the wisdom of man has framed; for such have the assurance of the one law-giver for their security, and if they are found *perfectly good*, or in his sight *do well*, they shall be rewarded. Man was at first framed to live and enjoy his Maker's favour in this way; nor is there any knowledge, that we have naturally, that can point out a better. We find

find many very earnest in the pursuit of eternal life this way, seeking after righteousness *as it were* by the deeds of the law; not that it should be thought they have nothing to do with the gospel; for, in general, that is esteemed as the best directory to obey the law. Nor are we to imagine, that every notion of grace is excluded from this system, for looking upon the progress of nature, as they imagine, under divine assistance, they can see great cause to say, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are*: and though they do not come up to the full requirements of the law, even in their own sense of it, yet they put their many acts of piety, charity, benevolence, heavenly-mindedness, &c. in the opposite scale, and, with pleasing admiration, fancy they see the balance in their favour. And as to their short-comings, occasioned by human frailty, the streaming sorrows of the heart-bleeding penitent are thought sufficient to wash away the impurity thereof. Now, to animate the votaries of this way, the rewards of virtue in this present life, but more especially in the life to come, are proposed to their consideration.—“To be conscious of that cloudless serenity within, which proceeds from passions subdued, under the superior authority of reason and religion;—to feast upon the *uninterrupted* joys, which this vain world can neither give nor take away; to bless and be blessed; to love and be loved; to be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame;—to serve him whose service is the glory of those who sit enthroned in heaven, and to have neither *thought* nor *wish*, which would not do us honour, if published before the universe—What sense of *dignity*, what *self-enjoyment*, must this consciousness yield!—And if such enjoyments are the rewards of virtue here, what, then, must be the undisturbed fruition of

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that state which the present weakness of the human understanding cannot adequately conceive of! &c.” Such is the doctrine, and such the stimulation to virtue, among some who profess to derive their religion from the Bible.—But what if it should appear, from that very book, that every son and daughter of Adam is under a law, which requires *sinless perfection*, on pain of eternal death—that the least transgression is infinitely heinous—and that no partial obedience, however sincere, can recover the divine favour, when once lost? and what if it should appear, from the express words of the great Law-giver, that the whole world is guilty before him? Then surely it will follow, that this doctrine is corrupt, the hope founded upon it delusive;—and that, while its votaries are pleasing themselves with the thoughts of being in the way to heaven, they are in fact going down to hell, with a lie in their right hand.—And that this is the case, plainly appears from Gal. iii. 10. Luke x 27. Mat. v. 22, 28; whence it is evident, that such is the nature of that law, which every intelligent creature is under infinite obligations to obey, that it extends to the inmost thoughts of the heart, and condemns the rising of anger, as *murder*, and the secret motions of uncleanness, as *adultery*. If it be denied by any, that every soul of man, is under obligations to keep the whole law, let the following thoughts be impartially weighed. If all are not under the law naturally;—then the rewards of obedience, and the threatenings of disobedience could not be *universal*. But the whole world is become guilty before God; and so are liable to the threatened curse. Rom. iii. 19. ch ii. 8, 9. Gal. iii. 10; therefore all men are naturally under the law. And however it might shock the boasted benevolence of some,
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to think of God destroying the soul and body of any of his creatures in hell; yet that book, from whence they profess to have gathered their creed, informs us, that the law, even as the ministration of death, is *glorious*. To urge that the remorse of the transgressor, or any degree of penitence, would bind or influence Jehovah to pardon him, would be an unworthy reflection upon the holy law, and the equity of the divine government; and would involve nothing less than an insinuation, that Christ died in vain, and that the doctrine of the cross is *foolishness*. But so far is *remorse* or *penitence* from averting the curse, or procuring pardon, or the highest human virtue, from balancing the least transgression, that a single grain of sand would do more towards overbalancing the world. If sin be an infinite evil (and consistently to deny it we must give up the whole of revelation) then “the streaming sorrows of the heart-bleeding penitent,” added to thousands of sacrificed rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil, will be of no avail to atone for it. Now that sin is an infinite evil, might be fairly demonstrated from—the *object* against whom it is committed—the malignant stain of it, which, unless atoned for, will eternally remain—the loss of an infinite portion in God being its demerits, and the eternal extent of that loss. Unless therefore an atonement of infinite worth be found out, the wrath of God must abide on the soul that sinneth; for this (however uncharitable it may appear in their view whom it affects) is the decision of that law, by which we are to judge ourselves and to be judged.

But the above system is found fault with and exploded by others, who yet maintain, “That though Paul says, where sin hath abounded, grace hath also superabounded; it does not
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therefore follow, that before one is by grace made acceptable, he may not through divine assistance prepare himself, by works morally good for the divine favour."—"I agree" says one, "with those who ascribe *a little* to free will, but *very much* to grace." Now, by the works hinted at here, we are to understand either sincere obedience to the law, or fulfilling the conditions of faith and repentance, or else complying with the terms of peace, to which we are told the blessings of the gospel belong, and which may be produced by nature, assisted by common grace. If any fixed meaning can be given to this jargon, it is something like the following, viz. that God will give all desirable assistance to the well disposed;—and if we do but what we can, or at least make but one step towards our reconciliation with him, he will give us his spirit to help us to proceed. The same sentiment has been given us in various other forms of speech, and by some with a great show of sound doctrine; we have been told, that "whosoever endeavours sincerely to please God, may rest perfectly assured, that God has no displeasure against him; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness." At other times the word of encouragement is given to the weak and feeble, though well-disposed, in this form, "In the usual methods of grace, evil habits are mastered by degrees—and it is a great while before the contrary habits of grace and virtue are grown up to any considerable degree of strength, and man comes to a confirmed state of goodness—but yet this ought not to discourage us; for so soon as WE have seriously begun this change, we are in a good way, and all our endeavours will have the acceptance of good beginnings, and God will be ready to help us;—and if we pursue our advantage, we shall every day

day gain ground, and the work will grow easier upon our hand." When our first beginnings to be better take the notion of sincere repentance, then we have the following instructions; "If you hate your former ways, which were not good, and sincerely repent of them, and with mourning hearts, and weeping eyes approach to God, for the pardon of sin; as that law, which is the unchanging standard of right, requires man should forgive his enemies, upon their repenting and asking pardon; much more will the divine author of that law.—To the *humble penitent* every encouragement is given." —But when the beginning of any good in us, is termed *acting faith upon Christ*, then the address runs thus: "If ever the spirit of God graciously influence your souls, ye will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability" (here follows the proof of this) "and yet enter upon a vigorous use of means. Ye will do for yourselves as if you were to do *all*; and yet overlook all ye do" (which by the way will be the greatest part of the work) "as if ye had done *nothing*. Will ye do *nothing* for *yourselves*, because ye cannot do *all*? Lay down no such impious conclusions against your own soul. Do what you *can*, and it may be, while ye are doing what you *can* for yourselves, God will do for you what ye *cannot*." And in order to remove every discouragement, from the thought that the natural man cannot please God, it is added, "Let us believe as we can, in obedience to God's command, and while we are doing so, although the act be at the beginning but NATURAL, yet in the very act, promised and purchased grace strikes in, and turns it into a supernatural act of believing." Thus, at length, it is found out how they that are in the flesh might please God!—This the apostle Paul had

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not attained to, Rom. viii. 8. To the same amount is the following address, "So soon as the sinner was disposed to accept, the Saviour was willing to bestow, free and full redemption; and the very first sigh that comes from an awakened heart, pierces the heart of our gracious God—the Psalmist says, he sent water into the wilderness to change its nature; that is, he sent his grace into our hearts to change their nature, to shew them their dead and barren state, to make them sensible of it, distressed under it, and then to cry to him for deliverance, and when his grace has thus far disposed the heart aright, and it can pray for more grace;—then will our Lord enrich it with abundant streams; for he is always disposed to give, in the measure we are disposed to receive."

These are but a few specimens, out of many that might be collected, to shew the use men have made of the gospel, in what sense they understand it, and how they expect to be saved by it. But if it be indeed true, as most of the above systems would insinuate, that man is a ruined creature, and so in a forlorn, helpless condition; it does not appear from either of these schemes, that there is any thing like *glad tidings of great joy*, to such an one; for however much the better disposed sort of people may be encouraged thereby, they contain no hope or encouragement for the simply guilty; for nothing can be gospel to such, but that which presents a sufficient ground of hope to them, while, in the divine sight, and in their own conscience, they stand justly condemned, as transgressors of the law. This the gospel of the grace of God does; and therefore every scheme of religion that teaches men to *do* any thing, or even to wait to have any thing done, to encourage their hope in God, is quite different in its nature and design, to the gospel

gospel of Christ, and in fact encourages man's natural disaffection to God, even while it leads him to fancy that he is at peace with him. The gospel does not teach us to do any thing for life, though it be varnished over with the most evangelical names, but to live by what is already *finished*, 1 John iv. 9.—It is, whether men perceive it or not, glad tidings of great joy to ALL people; and so must be free from what are called *the terms of the gospel*; for however small these *terms* are sometimes said to be, when they come to be explained, they shew that by far the greater part of the work of salvation, is left for the sinner to perform. The gospel is in fact nothing more than a report of the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. There are various summaries given of it in the scriptures, such as, “He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.”—“The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”—HE was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” and “God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;” yea, “Herein perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us,” and “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acception, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief among them;”—Wherefore he is able to save them to the UTTERMOST that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,” so then it is “not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour;
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our ;—that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” “ For now the righteousness of God, without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, *unto all and upon all them that believe*, for there is no difference ; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ;—whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.” The word that conveys this blessed righteousness “ Is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart ; that is the word of faith which we preach ; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved ; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation ; for the scripture saith, **WHOSOEVER** believeth on him shall not be ashamed—so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The glorious truths set forth in these words of scripture are, 1st, That the work of Christ finished upon the cross, does *in itself* contain every requisite for the justification of those who are ungodly and without strength ;—that God appears just in justifying such through the work of his Son ;—and that therefore, the Redeemer’s work is an all-sufficient ground of present peace to the guilty conscience, and of joy to the most disconsolate soul, without taking in any other consideration

deration whatever. 2dly, That salvation, thro' the finished work of the divine surety, is bestowed in the most sovereign, free, and unconditional manner, on sinners, without any distinction of character, nation, name, or degree; on sinners, *as such*, destitute of every qualification or recommendation whatever. Such are the persons, and such the deplorable circumstances of those, whom the gospel is designed to relieve and save! 3dly, That this gospel of the kingdom is brought near to the guilty, and that the faithfulness of God, in the free promise of life in Christ Jesus to sinners believing in him, is the *only* encouragement that the lost and helpless have to hope in divine mercy; and that to hope through any other medium, is to frustrate the true grace of God.

First: That Christ obeyed and suffered in the room of his people, has been before shown to be a scripture doctrine. We have seen that he placed himself in the lowest state of human wretchedness, even under the curse of God: beneath the full weight of which he expired.—Now had the Lord Jesus been confined a prisoner by the bars of death; it would have been fully demonstrated, that this work was not sufficient to bring salvation, to persons in the circumstances under which he died, and therefore we are taught to look upon his *resurrection*, as the grand central evidence of the sufficiency of his work:—of which fact the Lord therefore has been pleased to give ample evidence, both human and divine.—The old Testament foretold it—the new Testament confirms the glorious truth;—the Spirit, whom Christ promised, as the consequence of his resurrection and ascension, testifies of it, in the miracles which the apostles wrought, and the happy effects which the gospel had amongst the nations of the earth;

for though the gates of hell were set in opposition to it, the kings of the earth, and all human power united against it, and a fortress still more invulnerable in the hearts of sinners; yet such was the almighty power attending it, that it bore down all opposition, and proved itself mighty to save. If to all this be added the testimony of them whose interest it was to conceal it, it must appear that no fact can be supported by stronger evidence; and the truth of the resurrection of Christ being established, the sufficiency of his work to save the guilty, is confirmed. By his being placed under the law by sovereign grace, that according to the eternal purpose men might be blessed in him; God, by whose act of sovereignty he was appointed Mediator, in very faithfulness imputes his obedience and atonement to every one that believes, whereby they are made the righteousness of God in him.

The belief of this truth is the first and only thing which gives peace to a guilty conscience; for as the only reason God assigns, why any should be delivered from going down to the pit is, *I have found a ransom*; so this is the only reason of that *good hope* that comes through grace. When a guilty sinner understands that it is the voice of God that addresses his conscience, informing him that righteousness is imputed without works; he believes, ceases from his own works, and enters into rest by virtue of what he believes, concerning *Christ's being delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*.

Again: that good news which the gospel brings is, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, as such. Unless this be true, the scriptures contain no tidings of great joy to *all people*: nay, unless this be an established fact

fact, there is no just ground upon which any of the human race can approach to God; nor can any soul receive the least benefit by the work of Christ. Nature will teach us, and the law of Moses will confirm it, that if we do well we shall be accepted. But this cannot be glad tidings to those who are conscious of being the unhappy subjects of every evil inclination, and of having been to every good work reprobate. But happy for such sons and daughters of wretchedness, that the gospel is a pure stream of *grace*, flowing out of the throne of God and the Lamb. Far from being clogged with those manifold qualifications and prerequisites, which the sons of pride would make a kind of stepping-stone to the salvation of Jesus; the heavenly publication of grace does not lead poor sinners to look for the beginning of something for the better in themselves, under any notion whatever, previous to faith on the Son of God; but teaches them, even while destitute of every sign, work, or evidence, except what confirms their misery, to hope in the *bleeding sacrifice*. It reveals and establishes an important, comfortable, precious, undeniable truth; and leads the most guilty to take their *first beginnings* of hope, peace, and comfort from *it alone*. Thus the genuine gospel passes by, and totally disregards all those fine distinctions, which the pride of men prompts them to make, as so many cyphers; and in the most sovereign manner bestows the richest favours on the most unworthy among men. Every other scheme, but the gospel, leads men, either directly or indirectly, to take the beginnings of their hope from their sincere obedience, penitential tears, deep humiliations, watchfulness, earnest desires, holy breathings, repentances, faith, &c. If it be admitted that **SOMETHING** is requisite to appear in the soul,

that is favourable, and whereby we become, in some measure, different from the ungodly and profane; this fatal SOMETHING, whether we are aspiring after it, waiting for it, or in the supposed possession of it, is that awful instrument by which the God of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, should shine into their hearts, and is a grand reason why the gospel is foolishness to some, and a stumbling block to others: in short, it is the true cause of all disaffection to the gospel.—The gospel of the grace of God, making known the sufficient righteousness, and perfect atonement of Christ, as the sovereign cure provided of God for sinners, may very fitly (and with the strictest propriety) be called the ONE THING NEEDFUL. This in the word of faith is brought near to us, Rom. x.—6. 10. is directed to the attention of sinners of all sorts; to such as possess nothing but what is loathsome and disgusting; to persons whose character is fitly set forth, Luke xiv. 21. The poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind; and shows that as mankind are in an equal state of condemnation by nature, the most zealous devotee is as far off from God as the most prophane. In fine, it considers the whole human race as having turned their backs on God; and so the word of faith is a voice behind them, calling them in the most benevolent language to return, at the same time presenting a sufficient encouragement thereto. *Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted and far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry—Hear, and your souls shall live—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved.*

It has pleased the Lord also to leave on record

cord many PATTERNS of his grace, all of which import, that it is divinely sovereign, unboundedly rich, and infinitely free. And we are, moreover, informed, that those examples of Jehovah's long-suffering and mercy, were recorded to this end, *that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, through Christ Jesus.* Thus it appears that the eternal purpose of grace, manifested by the appearance of God our Saviour, and published in the word of faith, is the only encouragement that the wretched have to hope in Jehovah's mercy; so that hope, peace, or comfort taken from any source aside from, or in conjunction with, the abundant grace, is delusive, and must, in the end, make ashamed.

I shall conclude this Section with the words of an author, who writes with becoming reverence for the true grace of God, and like one who has tasted its sweetness, and knows its value. "The genuine gospel will always appear an insult on the taste of the public. Wherever it comes, if it be not received, it awakens disgust, and provokes abhorrence. Nor can it be otherwise. For its principal design is, to mortify the pride of man, and display the glory of grace; to throw all human excellence down to the dust, and to elevate, even to thrones of glory, the needy and wretched; to shew that those things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God, and that he who is despised of men, and abhorred by the nations, is Jehovah's eternal delight. The ancient gospel is an uncereemonious thing. It pays no respect to the academic, because of his profound learning; nor to the moralist, on account of his upright conduct. It has not the least regard to the courtier, because of his pompous honours; nor to the devotee,

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for the sake of his zeal or his righteousness. No: the potent prince and the abject slave; the wise philosopher and the ignorant rustic; the virtuous lady and the infamous prostitute, stand on the same level in its comprehensive view.—Its business is only with the *worthless* and *miserable*, whoever they be. If these be relieved, its end is gained. If these be made happy, its author is glorified, whatever may become of the rest. Towards these it constantly wears the most friendly aspect, and rejoices to do them good. But the self-sufficient of every rank are treated by it with the utmost reserve, and beheld with a steady contempt. He (the convinced sinner) wants to find himself some way *distinguished*, as a proper object of mercy, by holy tempers and sanctified affections. This is a bar to his comfort: this is his grand embarrassment. In other words, he is ready to fear, that he is not *sufficiently humbled* under a sense of his sins; that he has not those *fervent breathings* after Christ and holiness, which he ought to have, before he can be warranted to look for salvation with a well-grounded hope of success.—But the spirit of truth shows that there are *no* good qualities to be obtained; *no* righteous acts to be performed.—that we must come to Jesus under that character by which he calls us. But it is evident, he calls us by the name of *sinner*s. As sinners, therefore, *miserable, ruined* sinners, we must come to him for life and salvation—It was wrought for the *sinner*; it was designed for the *sinner*; and is bestowed, freely bestowed, on the *vilest* of sinners. It is not matter of bargain or the subject of sale; it is not proposed on I know not what *conditions*; as the performing some arduous course of duties, or the attaining some notable qualifications; but it is a *free gift*. Grace, as a sovereign, is exalted to con-

fer it; and grace, we know, deals only with the *unworthy*. As a gift it is imparted; as a gift, therefore, it must be received; and as for an absolute free gift, the possessor of it ought to be thankful. From these considerations we may with confidence affirm, that the *mere* sinner, the *obnoxious* wretch; he who feels himself in a perishing condition, and is conscious that he deserves no favour; has the strongest encouragement given him to rely on it, as *sufficient* for his justification and *free* for his use*.”

SECTION V.

THE NATURE AND MANNER OF THE OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT OF GRACE.

NOTHING is more generally mistaken, though nothing more important to be known and well understood, than the nature and manner of the operation of the Spirit of Grace. Many indeed have gone so far in profaneness, as to deny, flatly and openly to deny, that there are now afforded to mankind any divine and supernatural influences; and level the blackest charges against those who maintain the importance and necessity of this heavenly doctrine. It must be acknowledged, that too much ground has been given for a denial of divine influences by those enemies of the truth, who, professing themselves advocates for the doctrine, have run into the most profane enthusiasms, and the vilest jargon. In this Section, therefore, an attempt will be made

* See Booth's Reign of Grace, p. 3—9. 124—130. 416.

made to point out the absurdity of the former, to expose the enthusiasm and profaneness of the latter, and to set forth the scripture account of this important doctrine.

We have nothing to do here with those men of *wit*, who not only sneer at the work of the Holy Spirit, but also disregard every thing that wears the stamp of holiness: we rather address ourselves to those who, while they profess an uncommon attachment to the scriptures, and the one way of salvation by Jesus Christ, in fact, rank themselves among those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. Those who presuming they can produce a few passages of scripture (without regard to their connection) to show that the terms *word* and *spirit* are synonymous, fancy they have made a vast improvement in the scheme of Christianity; and so, with contemptuous sneer, pour ridicule upon all who acknowledge the divine sovereignty, and maintain the indispensable necessity of the operation of the Spirit of Grace, to give a true understanding of the word.

Their notion upon this subject is, that the word itself is a divine power, granted for us to believe by :—and that there is no supernatural agency necessary to go forth in the word, either for our instruction, edification, consolation, or establishment;—but it is *our adhering* to the written word. When persons of this sentiment condescend to explain themselves, we find that they look upon the scriptures as one would a common history, and maintain that all who understand the use of words, may attain to the true knowledge of the bible;—and that it is as foolish to talk of the necessity of the supernatural agency of the divine Spirit, to lead us into the truth, as to talk of waiting for his instruction when reading the history of England. Upon this

this plan it would seem that the more wise and learned they are, and the most skilful in the knowledge of words, they stand the fairest chance to enter into life, contrary to that authority which informs us, that *Not many wise men of the flesh are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; for it is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, &c.* 1. Cor. i, xix, &c.—If it be asked, why one receives the word and not another? Why do the most illiterate receive it, while the wise and learned, in the same assembly, manifest the most awful enmity against it?—It is replied, because the one mix the word with faith, while the other do not. If the question again be moved, how does one come to mix the word with faith, and not another?—Then we are told, because he perceives beauty and suitableness in it; which in fact only tends to provoke a repetition of the question, which when made; we are told, that we are not satisfied with the word—we seek a separate spirit, &c. And thus raillery is substituted in the place of argument, and anathemas in the room of scripture proof. In opposition to this sentiment it may be observed, that the highest evidence has been presented to the wise and learned, of the truth and divinity of the scriptures, without success. Rational and scriptural arguments have been urged, by him who spake as never man spake, with the addition of miracles to confirm what he said, and yet it all proved ineffectual; and he who knew what was in man, informs us, that *No man can come unto him, except the father draw him.* The preaching of Paul drew the contempt of the wise and learned, and was a stumbling block to the religious, 1 Cor. i, 23, and he points out the cause of this, 1. Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness*

foolishness to him ;—neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The pharisees made many converts; the judaizing teachers propagated their false gospels with wide success; yet neither reason, scripture, nor miracles did, in themselves, make men in love with the truth. Such is the natural and wilful darkness of man—such the awful infatuation that the god of this world spreads over the soul—and such the spirituality of divine truth; that until supernatural influence be exerted, gross darkness will remain. But here let it be observed, that unbelief is infinitely criminal, and that the whole blame of disbelieving the gospel lies at the sinner's door; Mat. xi, 20—25, John vi, 44, chap. viii, 24—47, chap. xv—22, Matt. xxii. 1, 7.

If any one is made wise unto salvation, it must be either by the creature, willing and running, or else through the Lord shewing mercy. But the scripture saith, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;—and, indeed, nothing is more firmly established in the sacred records, than that the eternal purpose of grace, manifested by the appearing of God our Saviour, and published in the scriptures of truth, is only applied to sinners by the Holy Spirit. All who are born of God are said to be *born of the Spirit*—all who have good hope through grace, abound in it *through the power of the Holy Ghost*—all who believe in Christ, and so are saved from the wrath to come, *obey the truth through the Spirit*, and are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by *the Spirit of our God*; love to God is shed abroad in the heart *by the Holy Ghost*; in short, the kingdom of Christ in the souls of his people is righteousness, peace, and joy, *in the Holy Ghost*.

Again: our Lord, when speaking of the Spirit

rit, says, *He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*—Here is a plain distinction between the *words* which Christ spoke, and the *Spirit* by whom the disciples were guided into the truth of those words. It is plain, therefore, that no one understands the truth but by *HIS* teaching; or believes it, but by *HIS* persuasion; or obeys it, but through *HIS* influence and power. I suppose it is customary, upon some occasions, for this class of professors to *pray*;—though I cannot see what propriety there is in their doing so, at any time or upon any occasion, while they retain this notion: for if we do not believe that divine influences are essentially necessary to give the word success, why should we pray to the Father of mercies to edify, sanctify, and comfort, us in reading or hearing the word? Is not this drawing near with the lips, while the heart is far from God? And must not such prayers be an abomination in the sight of the Lord? And can any, holding this sentiment, pray in faith for a blessing upon the word?

But on the other hand it is readily admitted, that the doctrine of the operation of the Spirit of truth has been much abused and traduced by men who have not the Spirit;—who teach that his operations are wrought by *mere energy*, making impressions upon the mind without the word of grace:—yea, some have ascribed to his agency, the most crude, ludicrous, and even diabolical whims and fancies;—all of which must also be an abomination in the sight of the Lord:—and if the holy anointing oil (which was a type of the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit) was forbidden to be counterfeited, on pain of being cut off from the people, *Exod. xxx. 31—33*, surely nothing can be more heinously wicked, nothing more pernicious to men, than coun-

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terfeiting the operation of the Holy Spirit, or imposing the delusions of the Spirit of darkness upon men, under the sanction of God's work. Yet what is more common among professors of religion, than to call every rapturous humour of the mind, every impulse of the imagination, and every false fire of the passions, the work and operation of the spirit of God? And if any one, out of zeal for God, and love to their souls, faithfully expose the delusion, and affectionately warn them to avoid the fatal snare, he will be thought an enemy to their peace, and be branded as an opposer of the Spirit.

It is still thought by some, that miracles, or something like them, are included in the work of the Spirit, even as in the Apostles' days.—Such would do well to consider, that those things, which, through the power of the Spirit, were wrought by the Apostles, were intended as confirmations of the truth which they preached; but when the whole mind and will of God to his church was completed, their end was answered, and their use ceased; for if they had been continued after revelation was declared to be completed, it would have been an argument against that declaration. Whoever therefore pretends to them, or is waiting for them, errs, not knowing the scriptures.

Again: it is generally thought that his saving work consists in disposing the mind to seriousness, restraining evil practices, and in working good dispositions and heavenly tempers, as they are called. But a person may have much seriousness about him, be very decent in his carriage among men, have a number of what we may think good and heavenly dispositions, and yet all this be nothing more than the effects of that principle, common to mankind, which teaches

es poor sinners to fancy themselves better than others, and that they are approaching very near in likeness to God, and so leads them to establish their own righteousness. Whatever teaches a poor sinner to do this, is not of God, but is that spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Further : it is thought that terrors of conscience, fearful apprehensions of God, and despair of the soul, proceed from the operation of the Spirit of truth. But this arises from a mistaken notion, and wrong application of what Christ says, John xvi. 8, *He shall convince the world of sin, &c.* He explains himself v. 9, (to take up his words, and put a construction of our own upon them, therefore, when the great Prophet condescends to explain, is, to say the best of it, very disingenuous indeed !) He informs us, that his Spirit would act as *the Comforter* in this operation, v. 7, by showing the world their sin in not believing in him ; which could not possibly be done, without giving them an understanding to know him that is true ;—and the knowledge of him would keep them from tormenting despair on the one hand, and from self-righteous confidence on the other. But many things which are not sins, because not a breach of any divine law, are sometimes attributed to the work of the Spirit ;—such as the remorse which seizes the conscience of the Papist for eating flesh on a fast-day, or a conscientiousness of guilt tormenting the mind of a Protestant Dissenter, as the consequence of having broken one or other of the laws of his particular church-covenant, &c. and this concern of mind can readily be removed without the atoning blood of Christ. It will be inquired, perhaps, how people came to be convinced of sin ?—And the scripture teaches us to reply, that convictions of

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sin, followed with torment and tending to despair, arise from the natural conscience, and the holy law ;—Rom. ii. 14, 15, chap. iii. 20 ;—the one revives and enforces the genuine dictates of the other, and conviction, arising from this quarter, will not suffer a person to think himself in a fair way of deliverance from the threatened wrath ; any more than a felon's being apprehended would be to him a hopeful sign of his being acquitted. Never will this kind of conviction prevailing in the mind suffer the least attempt to deliver himself out of the hands of his offended Sovereign ;—but will rather show him, that nothing but death and destruction are his just portion. Nor will he (I mean, while natural conscience is permitted to speak its genuine language) imagine that God will assist him to make his escape. But, as it hath been already hinted, many terrors may possess the mind, where the person has never been convinced of the evil of sin ;—such as frightful views of hell, impressions upon the imagination that the flames of hell are kindling about him, &c. by which he might be drove into actual despair, as thinking he is reprobated—that his day of grace is passed, or that he has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. For persons to be encouraged therefore to extract any degree of hope, peace, or encouragement from convictions, is but drawing off their hope from a profane to a self-righteous foundation ;—is only changing from an obvious delusion, to a more subtle and secret one, which makes their situation the more dangerous.

And as the *nature* of the Spirit's work has been grossly mistaken ; so also has the *manner* of it been sadly misunderstood. It has been generally thought that his manner of working is by some secret whisper, impression, or operation,
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without the written word; whereby sinners are taught to believe, that a work of grace is begun in them, and from which they are instructed to conclude, that they are the dear children of God. But without transgressing the bounds of scripture charity, it may be observed, that whatever spirit impresses, influences, or comforts a sinner, by any thing aside from what is written in the word of God, is fitly denominated, and justly characterized, by the following epithets;—*the spirit of the world—the spirit of disobedience—the spirit of error—the spirit of anti-christ—the spirit of slumber, &c.* The direct tendency of whose teaching is, to promote the work of self-independence which he began in our first parents; and one justly observes on this head, that “*This self-independence may be ranked among the most dangerous of the infernal politics, because the poison lies deep, and is too often undiscerned.*”

I shall now proceed to give some account of the Spirit of Grace and his work, by which alone we know the things which are freely given us of God. The spirit of whom we now speak, is distinguished from every other, under the titles of the *holy spirit—the spirit of God—the spirit of truth—the good spirit—the spirit of judgment—the spirit of knowledge—the spirit of wisdom—the spirit of faith—the spirit of grace—and the spirit of glory*. These sacred epithets plainly set forth the nature of his work;—and that we may speak it with all becoming reverence, let us remember that *the spirit of God*;—which should cause us to tremble, lest we ascribe any work to him, unworthy of his wisdom, justice, holiness or truth. The work of this sacred agent is to testify of Christ—to glorify him—to lead him into truth, and to comfort the disciples of Jesus. But our safest way of proceeding will

be to hear the faithful and true witness speak upon the subject, John xvi. 13—15, *When he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak—he shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and show it unto you. All that the father hath are mine, therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine, and show unto you.* From hence we learn, that the sole work of the promised Spirit is to glorify Christ, by testifying of him: and least we should fancy, that the Father would be dishonoured thereby, we are informed, that all things that the Father hath are Christ's; even every divine excellency, perfection and glory. Moses and the prophets, who wrote under the influence, and by the direction, of the Spirit of grace, had Christ for their theme. Many subordinate subjects, it is true, were introduced by them, to illustrate and confirm this one grand design; but to testify of Jesus in his person and sufferings, and to speak of the glory that should follow, was their primary design in writing—1, Peter i. 11. Rev. xix. 10. Acts x. 43. And as it was the prophets delightful employ, to testify of Christ through the Spirit; so also was it the one grand theme of the apostles of our Lord, on whom this Spirit in his rich effusions rested. Paul, in giving a summary of the doctrine which himself and fellow-apostles advanced, says, *we preach Christ crucified.* Hence it is plain, that the whole Bible is a testimony of Jesus; even as himself saith, *search the scriptures—for they testify of me.* The Spirit of Grace, therefore, through the whole of his work, of enlightening, quickening, edifying, and comforting sinners; speaks not of any thing distinct from, much less opposed to, the glory and compassion of Jesus. He shall not speak of *himself*; but whatsoever he

he shall hear, that shall he speak*. If then the Spirit of truth does not speak of *himself*, it cannot be supposed that he will lead any whom he instructs to speak of any work of his separate from Christ, who is the alone subject of his testimony. Whatever influence, then, men are led by, to talk of a work of grace, that is not wrought by the Spirit's testimony of the things of Christ, we may with certainty conclude, that it is not of God. Much less then can we suppose, that this glorious agent leads any to speak great things of *themselves*: of their own supposed efforts, pious exertions, humble breathings, holy strivings, &c. and to call them *his* regenerating influences. Far otherwise; his work stains the pride of man, by laying his fancied honour in the dust; and presenting a source of glorying in the Lord alone. But this doctrine deserves a more particular illustration. First: as the employment of the blessed Spirit is to lead into TRUTH, even the whole truth *as it is in Jesus*, of consequence he has no hand in teaching any thing inconsistent with, or unworthy of, the truth. He speaks and communicates only the things of Christ, and of the father whom Christ reveals; which things are *written*: there can, therefore, be no divine operation, but what is wrought by the concurring influence of the *word* and *spirit* of truth. Is it the Spirit's work to regenerate the soul? We are also said to be begotten by *the word of truth*, and *through the gospel*.

* What the author here says is exceedingly just, and it is noticed only to prevent improper cavils, that when it is said the Spirit *shall not speak of himself*, it means that he shall not speak *uncommissioned*, for it is immediately added, but *whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak*.

This however comes to the same thing that the author pleads for. It is *Christ* he is commissioned to speak of. He is the Spirit of the truth, guides into all truth, and shews Christ's glorious grace to the guilty.—Ed.

gospel. Are his regenerating influences compared to the old creation? It was by the *word of the Lord* that the heavens were made. He *spake*, and it was done; he *commanded*, and it stood fast. Is his work compared to the resurrection? That will take place by the dead hearing Christ's voice, John v. 24, 25. In one word, the beginning, and his future operations upon the souls of his disciples, in nourishing, comforting, establishing, and sanctifying them, are performed by the *word of grace*. It is by the *babes* partaking of the *sincere milk of the word*, that *they grow* into a more advanced state in Christ; and it was only by being nourished up in the *words of faith*, and of good doctrine that Timothy could be fitted for the work of the ministry. And as the work of sanctification is carried on in the soul, by the agency of the Holy Spirit; so our Lord informs us, that it is *the truth*, even the *word of truth*, that sanctifies, John xvii. 17, and ye are clean *through the word* which I have spoken unto you, see also Eph. v. 25, 26. To what has been observed it may be added, that the Spirit of grace never leads any to misapply the word; never comforts by the word in any other way, than by giving a true understanding of it, and applying the true sense of the passage to the soul. He does not speak a jot more than is contained in the written word; or lead to perceive any thing in one part of scripture, that is contrary to, or inconsistent with, the general scope of revelation.—Here I shall take the liberty to introduce the sentiment of *Calvin* upon this doctrine; that they who call themselves by his name, and yet plead for a work of the Spirit, separate from the word, may see how improperly they bear the name of *Calvinists*. He enquires of those who hold the spirit's operation without the word, "Whether they have tasted of any
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other Spirit than that which the Lord promised to his disciples?—But what manner of spirit did he speak of in the promise? Even that Spirit which should not speak of *himself*, but should minister, and inspire into their minds, those things which he, the Lord himself, had taught *by his word*.—It is not, therefore, the office of the Spirit which is promised to us, to feign new and unheard-of revelations, or to coin a new doctrine, whereby we should be led from the received doctrine of the gospel; but to seal in our minds *the self-same* doctrine that is commended to us *by the gospel*.—If any spirit, leaving the wisdom of the *word of God*, doth thrust unto us another doctrine, that same spirit ought rightfully to be suspected of vanity and lying. But lest under his (the Spirit of God's) name, the Spirit of Satan should creep in, he will have us to know him by that image of himself, which he hath *printed in the scripture*.—The Holy Ghost doth so stick fast in his truth, which he hath expressed in the scripture, that *then only* he putteth forth and displays his force, when the scripture has its due reverence and dignity.—The faithful know none other spirit; but that which dwelt and spake in the apostles, by whose oracles we are continually called to the hearing of the word.” Calvin’s Instit. B. 1. Chap. 9.

Having thus briefly noticed the *manner* of the divine Spirit’s operations, let us now attend a little to the *nature* of them. In general it may be observed, that when any one is instructed by him, he learns some precious truth of the word, which previously he was ignorant of—or some truth which he had been before taught, is seasonably revived in his mind, and his soul confirmed in the true understanding thereof; of which, comfort, direction, or support, will be the consequence. But more particularly, his work is

to convince of unbelief—to reconcile those who are at enmity against the truth, to it—and to further enlighten, quicken, comfort, and confirm, the souls of the disciples.

To fasten a conviction of UNBELIEF, even in the hearts of the wise, the learned, the devout, &c. as well as the profane, is the peculiar work of God, the sovereign of the conscience; it is what no man can do for himself, or work in another. This will plainly appear if we advert to the days when what our Lord says of the Spirit was eminently confirmed. The apostles went forth, not in the wisdom of the scribes, or the disputers of this world, or with the charms of human eloquence; but preaching Jesus and the resurrection, declaring the testimony that God had given of his son, that he was well pleased in him. By this testimony they commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, declaring with all boldness, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.* And though the gates of hell were moved against their testimony—though the god of this world exerted every artifice to blind the minds of men, and pervert the truth—though the lords of the gentiles, and the tyrants of the earth opposed it—though the men, who were in the highest repute for philosophy and universal literature, and were believed to be the most pious and devout upon the face of the earth, did all they could to prevent the name of Jesus from being mentioned; yet the Spirit of truth bore down, with irresistible evidence, the prejudices which men of all ranks had imbibed—convinced them that the whole world was guilty and in unbelief—emboldened many to receive the testimony, openly to confess salvation and eternal life through it, and made them willing to suffer the loss

loss of all things for it, yea, encouraged them rather to give up their lives, than let go the truth. But still it will be inquired, *How* does the Spirit convince of unbelief? In reply to which I would inquire, how do we come to know that we have been in error, about things in general which we have heard, and either denied to be true, or received under some mistaken notion, but by receiving a true understanding of the matter? Even so it is in the question under consideration. Man, previous to divine teaching, either wholly rejects the testimony of God, or receives it in a natural, carnal sense. But when the Spirit of grace enlightens the understanding, to know the truth as it is in Jesus; when he sets before any one the true grace of God, and gives him to behold the authority of God in his word, the soul readily discovers its former error; perceives its dangerous situation while in a state of ignorance; forsakes its former oppositions to the truth, or false notions about it; is ashamed of its evil ways, repents of them, and turns unto the Lord. The Spirit, therefore, convinces of unbelief, in giving an understanding to know him that is true.

Again: his work consists in reconciling enemies to God. It is a maxim that has not yet been refuted, that *the determination of the will, must evermore follow the illumination, conviction, and notice of the understanding.* Without staying to illustrate this at large, it may be observed, that scripture and matter of fact clearly show, that, when a sinner beholds the beauty and excellency of God in Christ, as displayed in the gospel, he immediately chooses that most lovely manifestation of the true God as his *chief good*. It is contrary to scripture to maintain, that the Holy Spirit, in his operation upon the minds of men, exerts any power that does the least

least injury to the highest, the most rational sense of human liberty, which consists in choosing what we like best;—and yet every part of his work is founded in pure sovereignty, directed by infinite wisdom, justice, mercy, and faithfulness. This blessed agent does not drag the sinner unwillingly, or against his will; but by bringing near to his view, the infinite loveliness of Jesus, and the preciousness, freeness, and glory of the gospel; and thus by filling the understanding with the light of truth, the man's will becomes effectually determined. The soul finds the charms of Christ so irresistibly strong, that every power thereof is drawn out after him; so that now should any other object propose itself as the *supreme good*; the happy sinner would, without hesitation, say, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He is now reconciled to the one way of salvation by free grace and sovereign mercy. It appears, therefore, that the essential difference between a real work of the Spirit of God, and every counterfeit thereof, is this, that to the one it is given to *know* the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; he has heard the word of God and *understood* it; while the natural man, whatever notions he has obtained of the gospel, *knoweth not* the things of the spirit of God, &c. It may be added, that when a sinner is reconciled to God by the Spirit, he will not be led thereby, to talk of a certain previous round of feelings which he has had, or serious acts which he has exerted; but will frankly confess, that all his strivings, and earnest and laborious exertions, in seeking, fasting, praying, resolving, &c. before he knew the truth in which he now rejoices, only tended to fear his conscience, and draw off his attention from the hope of the gospel; so that in all, he was doing that abominable

nable thing that God hated ; that now his only refuge is divine grace—his only hope, that sovereign mercy which the gospel makes manifest, and which the most profane have an equal right to with himself.

Further : Christ promised not to leave his people comfortless ; but to send the promise of his Father upon them, even the Comforter, who should bring all those things to their remembrance that he had spoken unto them, and thereby comfort their hearts with peace and joy, while in the world they had tribulation.—This he does by leading them into the grand, sublime, and inexhaustible fulness of the mystery which lay hid in God ; by gradually opening their understanding, and causing them thereby to grow up into *all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ ; filling them with all the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; strengthening them thereby, with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.*

We may now collect a summary of what has been said upon this matter : All men by nature are in error, ignorance, and unbelief—going on in a course of deception, deceiving and being deceived—no one but the Spirit of grace can spiritually enlighten, and comfortably undeceive them—this he does, not by the exertion of power without instruction, nor yet by teaching any doctrine about himself separate from Christ, but by taking of *the word of the truth of the gospel*, and causing that to enter into the soul, he thereby communicates the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ—that, as in the first beginning of his work on the mind, he uses no other instrument
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but the *written word*, so in all his future instructions, quickenings, &c. he proceeds by the same rule; which rule is the only touchstone that we have to try the operation of spirits by.

As the whole process of divine grace is sovereign, free, and efficacious; so the work of the Spirit uniformly wears the same aspect. All his operations are sovereign:—in every act the arm of the Lord is manifested, John iii. 8; no one can assign a reason why a wind should come, at any particular time, from one point in preference to another;—or why it goes in that direction, not in this, but that so it pleaseth its sovereign director. Neither can any account for one out of a particular company of hearers, and he perhaps the most illiterate, unthinking, and rebellious, coming to the knowledge of the truth and rejoicing therein, while the rest continue in enmity to it; but that the Spirit quickeneth whom he will. All his operations are also perfectly and unconditionally free. It was the crime of Simon Magus that he thought the Holy Ghost might be purchased with money; and it would have been a happy circumstance, had the spirit and essence of his crime died with him, or with that age; but alas! it is but too evident, while we find persons saying, that when we exert our natural efforts, &c. the Spirit will help us, and turn our natural aids into supernatural ones, that though the *letter* of Simon's crime is not common among us, the *essence* of it still prevails. But if the exertions of our natural abilities are the inducements, or *circumstances*, that encourage the spirit to work, grace is no more grace. And as all his operations are sovereign and free, so they are effectual. *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may*
give

give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater ;—
SO SHALL MY WORD BE THAT GOETH FORTH
OUT OF MY MOUTH ; IT SHALL NOT RETURN
UNTO ME VOID—BUT IT SHALL ACCOMPLISH
THAT WHICH I PLEASE, AND IT SHALL
PROSPER IN THE THING WHEREUNTO I SEND
IT.—Isaiah lv. 10. 11.

SECTION VI.

ON THE PRINCIPLE OF GRACE IN THE HEART.

IT is thought a matter of little importance by some, whether we conceive of the principle of grace in the heart previous to, and so distinct from the word of grace, or insist that the word of life implanted in the soul, is that principle. With all becoming deference to the learned persons, who have attempted to accommodate matters in this respect, the writer of these Essays takes the liberty of saying, that in his view of the matter, one of the most important distinctions is to be made, that concerns the whole system of experimental Christianity ; and that the schemes established upon these two hypotheses, are as much opposed to each other, in their nature, and necessary tendency, as light and darkness, or Christ and Belial.

The reader will observe, that the important difference attempted to be stated in this Section, is not whether there is any such thing as a supernatural principle, or habit of grace, in the soul ; nor whether that principle be abiding when implanted ; nor yet whether it is the

work of the Holy Spirit to implant it ; all these things are admitted, as important and undeniable facts. But our principal inquiries are,—wherein does the *nature* of the principle of grace consist?—and, are there any preparatives of *any kind* thereunto?—It will not be amiss to lay down some general and scriptural truths, which may tend to shorten this Section : such as that,—man is by nature *dead in sins*, nothing but spiritual death is to be found in the unregenerate soul,—all works proceeding from man in that state are *dead works*;—for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit;—there can be no spiritual life infused into man, but what proceeds from Christ;—so that “He that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life;”—the figures, metaphors, representations, &c. which set forth the darkness of the mind, or man’s sinful state by nature, do not lead us to any gross conceptions of the disease, as though it were something *material*, and so needed some *physical* or *mechanical* power to be exerted to rectify it* ; but rather, the scripture doctrine of the fall is, that the moral rectitude of the soul is disordered, the understanding darkened through error, ignorance, and unbelief, whereby the will is influenced to rebellion, the affections are become unholy, sensual and brutal ; all of which is made manifest by false worship, false hope, false comforts and evil works ;

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* No subject has been more betroped and befigured than the article of *inherent grace*. Scriptural writers speak figuratively of the religion of the heart—they call it *circumcision*—*dying*—*living*—*seed*—*creation*, and so on ;—and many divines, instead of reducing metaphor to meaning, affix gross notions to those terms, and cover them with grosser still, till one would think conversion consisted in the actual addition of some new bodily organs, or mental powers, when nothing perhaps is intended but the *belief of a truth* or the *practice of a virtue*.—*Claude’s Essay on the composition of a Sermon*, vol. I. p. 398.

by the deep-rooted enmity of the heart against God, and the aversion there is to depend simply upon his word. These things premised, I shall now proceed to take some notice, of the prevailing notion of a *principle* of grace in the soul, I mean previous to the *word of life* being implanted there by the Holy Spirit.

What is generally asserted upon this subject is this, that there is in regeneration, an inherent, spiritual, principle implanted in the soul, previous to, and so separate from the hearing, understanding, and receiving the gospel of Christ. The nature of this principle, the manner of its coming into the soul, and the use that should be made of it when discovered there, are matters about which the professing world is by no means agreed;—some plead for certain principles in the soul, previous to this principle; but here again they are divided wherein these principles consist; while others maintain, so far justly, that there is no medium betwixt being dead in sins, and being new creatures; and these generally hold, that this principle is infused into the soul, it does not know when, how or where, or in fact whether it is there or no, till by the help of some kind, casuistical friend, he is *enabled* to persuade himself that it is so. Though it frequently happens, that to a person's dying day he remains in painful suspense, and dreadful anxiety about it.—But let us hear each of these divided parties speak for themselves.

“Man comes to the grace, whereby we are regenerated in Christ, by a natural faculty;—as in asking, seeking, knocking; and *before* they are born again, there is repentance, a sorrow for sin, a change of life for the better, and a beginning of faith, and an initial love of God, and a desire of grace: these are an *occasion*” (how mo-

destly expressed) “by which God is *moved* to bestow his grace. For such is the mercy of God, that he recompenses these *very small* beginnings of good, with this illustrious reward.” We have the same sentiment given us in the following words. “Some work of man therefore goes before his vivification; viz. to acknowledge and bewail his death; to will and desire deliverance from it; to hunger, thirst, and seek after life; all which, and a GREAT DEAL BESIDES, is required by Christ in those whom he will make alive.” To these things it has been replied, that since we are *dead in trespasses and sins* we can do nothing before, by way of preparation for grace, unless we think sinful thoughts and rebellious actions will do it. But, moreover, we have seen persons the best disposed for this kind of grace—the person mentioned Matt. xix. for instance: he was full of good intentions, inflamed with a desire after heaven, and of a blameless life before men, notwithstanding which he was disapproved of; and there was another, whom we are told was not far from the kingdom of heaven—wanted, as it were, but one step, and yet publicans and harlots, who were void of the least good qualification, went in before those who were civilly righteous, and externally religious. Nor does it happen favourably to this scheme, that the scriptures point out several examples or actual proofs of the assertion, that in the first manifestation of grace to the soul, God is found of them that sought him not: and made manifest to them that asked not after him. But we have been ingeniously informed upon this head, for the encouragement of the well-disposed, that “He is sometimes found of them that seek him not;—*much more* will be found of them that seek him, in his appointed way.” If we call to
mind

mind the true signification, of the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto men, it will readily appear that, upon this plan, *grace is no more grace.*

There are others who agree in the main with the class above referred to, about the nature of this principle, and who, with them, insist upon the necessity, of some kind of pre-requisites thereunto, and yet would seem to differ from them, about the author of these previous principles, and the design of their being wrought in the mind. "In persons to be regenerated is required a breaking of the natural obstinacy, and a flexibility of the will—a sound law-work upon the soul—a legal fear of punishment and a dread of hell, &c. and some anxiety about deliverance." But then we are informed that, "These things are not produced by nature alone, but are rather to be conceived of as the effects of the spirit of bondage preparing a way to himself for their actual regeneration. And that God does not bestow the grace of regeneration from a regard to, or moved by occasion of, these preparations, much less by any merit in them, but God in this manner *levels* a way for himself, fills vallies, depresses mountains and hills, *in order the better to smoothe a way for his entrance into the soul.*" To which it has been replied, that all this, and more is common to those, who perish, and therefore cannot, either *from the nature of the thing, or the intention of God*, be preparative for regeneration. Not the former: for however great these things may appear to be, yet they continue within the verge of spiritual death; and sinners are so far from being disposed thereby to *spiritual life*, that on the contrary, deceived by these acts, which counterfeit spiritual life, they are the more hardened in real death, and fondly pleasing them-

selves, are at a greater distance from inquiring after *true life*, which they falsely imagine they have obtained. Not the *latter* : for no intention of God can be rendered void. (See *Witsius* on Regeneration.) It may be added, that the grace of God does not consider man as upon the return to God—willing to be saved, and only needing a little help ; but as being quite indisposed, even so much as to hearken to God's method of salvation ; or rather, quite at enmity with the God of grace ; though it is natural enough for sinners to be in love with a false, or what Paul terms a perverted, gospel. Hence the complaint which the Saviour brings against them is not, they are not sincerely disposed to come—they have not yet had a sound *law-work* upon their souls ;—they are not sufficiently terrified with the dread of hell, &c. but YE WILL NOT COME UNTO ME. The fact is, God would have the ends of the earth, sinners at the greatest distance from him, to behold the salvation which he has provided, and live ;—but sinners will not come *as such*, and yet they fancy they are willing to come. It is plain they want to make a more creditable appearance, before they do come, that when they approach, it may be manifest to all, that God had not so much trouble to save them, as those despicable wretches, the Thief, Zaccheus, &c.

Again : there are others who deny absolutely, any work previous to regeneration, who yet zealously maintain, that a principle of grace is infused into the soul, by the Spirit of God, *previous to*, and distinct from, the gospel of grace, which principle contains the habits of every other grace, faith, hope, love, &c. which principle also disposes the soul, to receive and delight in the word of God ; for we are told “The principles of faith, hope and love, must be in the soul

soul *prior* to the knowledge of what we are to believe, hope in, and love." This kind of doctrine is so mystical and metaphysical (not to say enthusiastical and unintelligible) that though it plainly appears what it leads to, yet to reconcile it either to scripture or common sense, would be a task unsurmountable to any but those who are skilled in the *depths* of the doctrine. The following sentence seems, in some measure, to set forth the notion under consideration. "The reason why the word of Christ was effectual upon Peter's hearers, when three thousand were converted, and that it had no success, at Chorazin and Bethsaida, when Christ himself preached, is not to be attributed to any different energy upon the mind of one more than the other;—but rather to the different *principles* of those to whom it came—the word is attended with *the same power* and efficacy, simply considered in itself, in all places, and at all times:—the difference, and reason of its success is, one is *principled*, and the other is not; and therefore, had all had the same principles, all would have received it alike."*

I shall not stay here to remark upon this sentence which, it is obvious, is contrary to the true grace of God, and virtually, with the Arminians, opposes the work of the Spirit; but proceed to consider the principles upon which this notion is founded. And we are told, that "Man being dead
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* A friend, upon reading the above, observes, in a letter to the author of these Essays, that "This *previous principle* destroys the use of prayer for a blessing upon the word; all prayer on such principles must be *conditional*, thus, "If thou seest any, here *already principled* for the reception of the word, bless it to them." If the word is attended with the *same power* in all places, and at all times, it would be as foolish for me to pray for a blessing at any given time, as for me to pray, that the Sun may rise March 19th, 1784, an hour sooner than it did former years."

in trespasses and sins, void of the least degree of spiritual life, he must necessarily be *passive* in the work of regeneration, FOR DEAD MATTER CANNOT ACT. But wherever the word of grace is received to any good purpose, it always supposes the mind to be active in the entrance thereof. Therefore, sound reason teaches us to conclude, that there must of necessity be a principle of life existing in the soul, before it can hear, understand, and receive the word, and so cannot be the grace of the gospel implanted: nor can the word be the instrument of implanting it;—unless we can conceive, with any degree of rationality, of one seeing without eyes, hearing without ears, receiving without action, or believing the word of God without faith.”—Here we are presented with an argument blended with scripture and some sort of metaphysical philosophy, which the apostles were cautious to keep separate, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect:—for to entertain precious souls with philosophical speculation, about the *activity* and *passivity* of the mind in receiving the truth, tends to lead them from *that* which alone can give peace to the conscience, purity in the soul, and holiness in the life.

That man is dead in trespasses and sins, is an awful fact, admitted and much lamented—that he must therefore be necessarily passive in regeneration is freely granted—and that “dead matter cannot act,” is also readily acknowledged. But surely that system of philosophy that would teach us to compare “dead matter” to a SPIRIT that cannot but think and be conscious, ought not to be reputed sound. It is plain that man *can* be regenerated, he has faculties in which the principles of regeneration *can* be wrought; but *dead matter* cannot, in the same sense, be regenerated; and so then the parallel

is altogether impertinent to the subject. And if a possibility of being regenerated is intended, by having the principles of faith, &c. it is granted, and when we think of God, and behold his works, we must say, is any thing too hard for him? But we have instances recorded in the scripture of the power of the *divine word* to animate and vivify even "dead matter." "And God said let the EARTH bring forth living creatures," &c. And of the truth of this we have full evidence at the grave of him who had been dead four days John xi. 39—44. Here we behold that *dead matter* was forcibly and effectually worked upon and quickened by the *living word* of Jesus. But, dismissing any further remarks about dead matter, let us turn our attention to a *living spirit*.

The minor proposition we beg leave to deny, which may be done without falling into the absurdity and irrationality of saying a person may see without eyes, hear without ears, &c. and if this can consistently be done, then not only the conclusion must fall to the ground, but most of the arguments for this doctrine being built upon kindred premises, will be weakened, if not overturned. The whole argument goes upon the supposition, that in hearing, understanding, and receiving a report of testimony, the mind must necessarily and invariably be, not only *active*, but also *well disposed* to the tidings which it conveys: which seems as though some fatal necessity had forced us to love and delight in a thing before we have either heard or understood any thing about it! It is granted, that the mind frequently, though not necessarily and invariably, is active in receiving a report; and also, that what it is well disposed to, it frequently seeks to hear of, in order to receive. But very often we receive reports

reports not only without having a good disposition towards them ; but we have been forced to admit them through unquestionable conviction of their reality and truth, even though the inclination would wish to oppose them. Thus a criminal receives sentence from his judge—a servant reproof from his master—and thus on the day of Pentecost, Christ's murderers were convinced of sin sorely against their inclination. And are not our minds frequently surprised, by receiving the knowledge of that which gives us pleasure? But what is that inability in man which is the ground work of his opposition to the truth ; are not we too apt to forget ourselves that it is of a moral and spiritual nature? That it consists in having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, and that the soul being under the fatal influence of error, ignorance, and unbelief, it opposes the true grace of God? Are we not too apt to forget that the language used to describe this awful state is frequently metaphorical, and in consequence thereof, run into some thoughts of a physical or natural death of the soul, or privation of animal life, at least of the natural faculties? But does not man's *inability* consist in his loving darkness rather than light, in a disinclination to depend upon a holy sovereign God; and not from the want of rational faculties, so that he *would* return to, and depend upon God, if he *could*? Now it is perfectly agreeable to sound reason and good sense to say in this case, that if the *cause* of this spiritual death be removed, the necessary effects thereof will be removed also: and if the disease consist in error, ignorance, and unbelief; these being done away, and truth, knowledge, and faith implanted in their stead; the soul must be renewed;

ed; the renewal will consist in the implanting of these things; and that which removed their opposites may, with propriety, be termed the means or instrument of the work. If then ignorance, &c. are the very essence of the natural man's darkness; what can remove it but the entrance of the light of divine truth? For as when the sun riseth darkness fleeth away, so *the entrance of the word giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple*, Psalm cxix. 130. That is, the word is the very first principle of spiritual light in the soul: and this word, under the direction, and by the influence of the Spirit of grace, being implanted in the soul, light, life, and spiritual activity, are the certain concomitants. As then, the very essence of spiritual death, consists of ignorance about God's true character, of error about the way of salvation by Christ Jesus, and in disbelieving the divine word; and as the true character of God, the way of life, &c. are only made known in the scripture, spiritual death, or man's natural darkness cannot be removed, and the divine life communicated to the soul, but by the entrance of *the word* through the 'power of the Spirit.

But let us consider those irrational consequences which we are thought to fall into by this kind of doctrine. (1st.) "It cannot be rationally received, that the principle of grace is the word implanted, unless we can make it out that one can see without eyes." Here it is readily acknowledged, that we must have eyes before we can perceive objects; and also that we must have a spiritual principle before we can discern divine beauties; but it should be kept in mind, that the hinge upon which the enquiry turns, is—*what* is that principle, and how is it implanted. As it is commonly acknowledged

knowledge, that Christ's miracles of healing all manner of sicknesses, &c. were signs of his ability to save his people from their sins; so also that the way which he took to perform them, serves as a fit illustration of that way, by which he blesses his chosen with all spiritual blessings. Mark x. 53, informs us that sight was given to the blind by the *word* of Jesus. It appears to be in the same way that Saul of Tarsus received his sight, Acts ix. 17; in other cases Jesus chose, by his word to give success to different means, Matt. ix. 28, 29, John ix. 1. though he could have done it by mere invisible energy. We have seen wherein spiritual blindness consists, and likewise how it is removed: to what has been observed might be added, Psalm xix. 8.—“The *commandment* of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,” even as we may suppose the entrance of a *torch* enlightens a dark room; to do which, would it not be absurd to say, that there must of necessity be some principles of light in the dark room, which disposed it to receive the light? Rather did not the light disperse the darkness? Even so did the word of Jesus disperse the natural darkness of him mentioned, Mark x. 52; and in like manner is spiritual eyesight given to those, whose understandings the god of this world has blinded. (2dly,) Nor shall we be driven to embrace the irrational notion, of “hearing without hears;” for admitting the physical necessity of having the sense of hearing, previous to being active in the reception of sounds; the point pleaded for is sufficiently established by submitting to the simple dictates of scripture upon this head; not only in Mark vii. 32. have we an account of a deaf man being brought to Jesus to be cured and v. 34, of the manner *how* the cure was wrought; (Jesus

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looking up to heaven, sighed, and said unto him, *Ephphatha*, that is, be opened, and straightway his ears were opened); but Psalm lviii. 4, 5. spiritual deafness is thus described: "They will be like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears: which *will not hear* the voice of charmers, charming ever so wisely;" plainly showing, that this deafness is not any defect subsisting in the natural faculties, but mere enmity to that which addresses them, Acts vii. 57. Hence it is said, "Bring the deaf men that have ears." And surely he who first formed the ear can, whenever it pleases him, command attention, and by the force of his almighty voice, cause not only the *deaf*, but even the *dead*, to hear and obey him. He saith, Isaiah xxxv. 5. The ears of the *deaf* shall be unstopped; and it should be observed that the truth as it is in Jesus, is not received upon a long chain of rational conclusions; but upon the authority of him who speaks in the sacred records. We may see this sentiment confirmed in various places in the scriptures.—Our first parents fell by admitting a falsehood into their minds: and they were renewed in *knowledge*, by hearing the voice of the Lord God conveying the welcome tidings of a Saviour. Was there any principle of grace in Adam's heart previous to the hearing the word of reconciliation? And was not the divine word the instrument of conveying that knowledge whereby he was renewed? Surely no one can put on a face to deny the last question; and without doubt corruption and grace, and their methods of working, are the same in all ages.—The case of Matthew is much to our purpose, Luke v. 27, 28. to see a man of his infamous character—in the midst of his avaricious and oppressive employment, wrought upon by a *word speaking*: so wrought

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upon as to change the whole bias of his soul; is such a proof that the word is passively implanted—that it is the very first principle of light, and the instrument of regeneration, that it requires a good deal of *art* to make even a tolerable opposition to it.—The instance of Zaccheus recorded Luke xix. 1.—6. corroborates the doctrine. It will hardly be thought, that grace in his heart influenced him to climb the tree; for nothing is more plain than that he was then a graceless wretch. Curiosity seems to have been the motive, that he might the more advantageously behold Jesus, whom he had heard of as an extraordinary person. When the Saviour SAID unto him, make haste and come down, &c. the happy effects quickly manifested, that the heavenly *word* was quick and powerful, and brought every needful requisite along with it.—*Paul's regeneration is thus recorded, Acts ix. 3—8. where it is obvious, that the VOICE accompanied with divine power unstopped his deaf ears.

Let us now consider the genuine import of some passages of scripture which are made use of to prove the *previous principle*: 1st. The implanting

* Mr. Hervey says, pointing to the apostle's own words in describing his conversion, "Can any thing denote a more iniquitous and savage temper! 'Tis the very picture of an incarnate devil—the favour of man is backward to interpose till something amiable and inviting appears in the object; but the grace of God is immensely rich, and infinitely free. It *prevents* the most vile and hardened rebel, it brings every requisite, and recommendation in its own unspeakable and beneficent nature. It accomplishes all its blessed ends, not by any *towardly* disposition in the sinner; but by that one glorious righteousness provided in the Saviour. This overtook the persecutor in his journey to Damascus, light and comfort were poured upon him, *not from any dawn of reformation* in himself, but from a very different quarter; by opening as it were a window in heaven, while he sojourned even in the suburbs of hell. *He saw that just one*, and was made partaker of the inestimable gift."

planting of grace in the heart is, Eph. ii. 1. called *quicken*ing, and we are asked, "What instrument does God make use of to implant the soul in the body?" In reply to this *deep* question, the writer frankly confesses he cannot tell. But if the enquiry be, how is a soul dead in trespasses and sins quickened and made alive unto God, the scriptures furnish us with a sufficient reply, John v. 24, 25. When the word of grace enters into the soul, through divine influence, it conveys the knowledge of Christ, which quickens the mind to delight in him, and ardently to long after him, John iv. 10. 1 Cor. xv. 45. 1 John v. 11, 12. As the spirit dwelling in the first Adam's body, made him a living soul; even so Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, begins and maintains the life of God there. Such a soul will say, with the psalmist, "Thy *word* has quickened me." 2dly. The implanting grace in the heart is called a resurrection, Eph. i. 19, 20. and the question put in favour of the previous principle is, "What instrument do you suppose Jehovah made use of, when he raised Christ from the dead, and what instrument will he make use of in the resurrection of the dead?" and it has been added, "none at all, no not even his *word*." Here it should be observed, that power or efficacy must always be of such a nature as is suited to the object upon which it is exerted. And though it may appear, that the power which raised Christ from the dead was what may be called a *physical* power, it does not follow, that the *same kind* must be exerted towards them that believe; nay, the contrary is manifest, ver. 17, 18. But then we are told, that the metaphor is destroyed. By no means; for in both cases, nothing less than the great power mentioned in the word is exerted by the divine Spirit; and

this is the very essence of the metaphor. And as to the spiritual resurrection, we are expressly told, Col. ii. 12, that it is produced through the faith of the operation of God; see Ez. xxxvii. 1—10—3dly. The work is compared to the creation, Eph. ii. 10, and we are asked, what instrument was made use of in that work? and reminded of xlv. 24. That the old creation was a figure of the new will appear by comparing the one with the other. The first creation of the world was out of nothing, so nothing was prepared for the second, no good, no virtue, NO PREVIOUS DISPOSITIONS in the subject: yea, something indeed was in being, which had no place in the old; but that was only rebellion and enmity, making vehement opposition to the almighty grace of God. The first was performed by the COMMAND of God, the second in like manner, “Of his own will begat he us by the WORD OF TRUTH, James i. 18. The rudiments of the first were an undigested mass, *“The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”* Gen. i. 2. In like manner, all things lie in base confusion in the soul, when it is to be adorned by the new creation, and depraved lusts are violently agitated every where without any order. Those things which should possess the upper place, are depressed to the lowest. There is also a surprising emptiness of every thing that is good, Rom. vii. 15. Neither are all things only surrounded with the gross darkness of ignorance, but the whole soul is nothing but darkness itself, Eph. v. 8. When God was pleased to adorn the world he had created, he began with the production of light, and he takes the same method in this other creation. “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, &c. 2 Cor. iv.

6 † 4thly. The case of infants is thrown in, as an unsurmountable objection to this doctrine; yea, it is said that, "Upon this plan there is as much ground for the regeneration and salvation of infants, as there is for that of *devils*!! That *all* infants are saved, is a pleasing fact founded in the word of truth; for Christ says "Of *such* (that is, mostly of *such*) is the kingdom of heaven," even that innumerable multitude made righteous by the obedience of the divine surety, Rev. vii. 9. Infants have done no evil, and yet die by the imputation of the first Adam's transgression; they have done no *good*, and yet are entitled to eternal life through the obedience of the second Adam, and so enter in upon the very same footing as St. Paul, and all others that are saved. But it is a hard matter for us to submit to that doctrine which teaches us to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. Yet whoever thinks that their believing, or any activity in themselves whatever, is taken into consideration in their justification to eternal life, are without doubt ignorant of the true grace of God. Without admitting the salvation of infants, it cannot be shown, how Christ hath bruised the serpent's head—destroyed the works of the devil—and abolished death. It is plain infants are among the number mentioned, Rev. xx. 12—15. But they not having done evil, can have no sin charged upon them against either the law of nature, the written law, or the gospel, so cannot be judged and condemned out of these books. We must either say, therefore, that there is a purgatory for them, or according to some modern refiners of Popery, a *middle state*, the notion of which is without the shadow of a foundation in scripture, and is ab-

† See *Wittrius' Oecon.* b. 4. chap. 6. p. 49.—50.

absolute nonsense; or admit that they are written in the Lamb's book of life. See Deut. i. 39. And if a person is *passive* in receiving the truth, then why may we not say that the efficacy of the divine Spirit can and does implant the truth in the soul of an infant: which we can have as clear conceptions of as that which is so generally admitted, viz. that a falshood, first instilled into our federal-head, dwells in them, and corrupts their souls. 5thly, It has been thought that the *good and honest* heart, mentioned Mat. xiii. 8. Luke viii. 15. is an argument in favour of grace in the heart, previous to the truth being implanted. To this it has been observed, that the scope of the parable is to represent the different effects of the word. But this has been cavilled at, though never yet sufficiently refuted. Some, however, have thought, that the good and honest heart has reference to those who, like Simeon, Cornelius, &c. were waiting for the kingdom of God; who had believed in the Saviour *to come*, and so were justified by his righteousness, as Abraham was; and who, when they heard the word, testifying that the Christ was actually come, readily received it. From the whole, if grace can be in the heart, previous to the word of Christ entering there, then the gospel is not the power of God unto salvation; neither is there any essential need of Christ, especially not of his word. For whoever is regenerated shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, because such being born of God, are heirs of the promise of eternal life; and can this be, without understanding and knowing the true character of God, or believing in the name of Christ, or even hearing of his name? Though the implanting of this principle in the heart, is ascribed to the Spirit of God; it is plain that he has nothing

thing to do in the affair; for it is his office to testify of Jesus, and to apply the things which speak of him. He works, not by energy alone, but by the almighty, persuasive force of truth; and by instruction leads those whom he teaches, to speak of Christ, and to rejoice in him. But the spirit that implants this previous principle, leads persons to boast but too commonly of *themselves*; he cannot therefore be the Spirit of God; nor is it the true grace of God which he implants; and it must follow, that the various systems of doctrinal and experimental religion, that are founded upon this principle, are essentially different, in their *nature* and necessary tendency, from the gospel of the grace of God. Their necessary tendency, therefore, must be to mislead, perplex and entangle, if not to delude and destroy the souls, who are founding their hope of eternal life upon them.

Having said so much in opposition to the distinct, previous principle of grace in the heart generally pleaded for, and but too commonly made the foundation of a professor's hope, as it is most obviously the source of various errors, more especially in experimental religion; I shall do little more in this section, than briefly show wherein the true principle of grace consists—confirm the sentiment by the word of God—and then shew the harmony of this view of the principle of grace, with every other part of the revelation of the true grace of God.

The *true* principle of grace in the soul is the GOSPEL in its true import, implanted there by the Spirit of God, which is properly a divine *instinct*, a *living* and *abiding* principle. It counterbalances the corrupt principle which resides in the soul; and powerfully and effectually inclines it to desire the sincere milk of the word—

to live upon the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ—to exercise every becoming affection towards him, as he is revealed in the word—and influences to a conduct agreeable to the gospel. This is that new heart and right spirit promised in the new covenant, and the scriptures expressly prove that the truth in the love of it, dwelling in the heart, is the *only* grace of God that his Spirit implants, Heb. x. 16. Is. li. 4. John xii. 49, 50. Rom. iii. 27. ch. viii. 2. Is it inquired, how we are made partakers of the DIVINE NATURE, that is, of the *communicable* attributes of God, his wisdom, happiness, love, and holiness? Peter informs us, that it is through the *knowledge* of him who hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious *promises*; that *by these* you might be made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 3, 4. Is it asked, how do we become the children of God? The reply is, “ *Being born again, not with corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the WORD OF GOD which LIVETH AND ABIDETH FOR EVER, even the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*” Jam. i. 18. 1 Peter i. 23, the word is the SEED, the supernatural, vital, unchanging, incorruptible principle of *divine life*. Spiritual life is only in Christ, and is communicated from him by knowledge to his people. *God hath given us eternal life, and this life is IN HIS SON. He that hath the Son, hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life,* 1 John v. 11. 12. however much he may amuse himself with a notion of a principle of grace dwelling in his heart. These simple declarations of scripture confirm the doctrine under consideration, beyond all reasonable contradiction. This is life eternal to *know* the only true God and Jesus Christ; and if any modern refiner should object

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to these, a thousand passages that *seem* to make against it, and thereby urge the old insinuation "Yea hath God said," &c. the scriptures being one perfect harmonious system of incorruptible truth, clear of the least contradiction in any of its parts, we should take the plain evidence of these divine witnesses as absolutely decisive, and impute any quibble that forms a seeming contradiction, to the blindness of man, who naturally opposes his own wisdom to the revelation of God. We may here take notice, how suitable the divine word, in the hand of the Spirit, is, to perform every operation by which this principle is denominated. Is it called *grace in the heart*? The gospel is styled *The word of grace*. Is it termed *The truth in us*? The gospel is *The word of truth*. Is it called *life*? The scriptures are the *words of life*. Is it conceived of as a principle of *faith*? The gospel record is *The word of faith*, &c.

When this divine principle is implanted in the soul, the true knowledge of God is given. That is, a true knowledge of God in Christ, where justice and mercy in perfection unite, shine, and harmonize. This is the true grace of God. This the sinner believes with all his heart. His standing is fixed upon it; and it begets every answerable affection there. Hence the true gospel, being the proper principle of grace, begets in the soul faith, hope, love, &c. and is the genuine source of all true experience. This view of things preserves the glorious system of grace, in its beautiful symmetry, its grand and uniform connection. Let us take a summary view thereof. If we conceive of grace dwelling in the eternal purpose, it is nothing more than Jehovah's sovereign design of shewing favour to the people of his choice, through the Son of his love. If we take the term for the

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the manifestation of his great love, free favour and boundless compassion, it is discovered in the incarnation, life, sufferings, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom grace and truth came. If we speak of grace as a doctrine, then it is the word of truth, revealing, explaining, and proclaiming the nature, end, and design of Christ's work, as the Surety of his people. And if we take the term to signify that vital principle, by which we are partakers of spiritual life, it is the doctrine of Christ implanted in the understanding, possessing the will, and influencing the affections and conversation: and so conforming the soul to Christ, which was the very end of being chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

The following remarkable words of Dr. Owen, may be considered as an epitome of the whole of this essay, and with them I conclude it: "As the word is in the gospel, so is grace in the heart; yea they are the *same things variously* expressed, Rom. vi. 17, as our translation doth not, so I know not how, in so few words, to express that which is *emphatically* here insinuated by the Holy Ghost. The meaning is, that the doctrine of the gospel begets the *form, figure, image, or likeness* of itself, in the hearts of them that believe: so they are cast into the *mould* of it. As is the one, so is the other. The principle of grace in the *heart*, and that in the word, are as children of the same parent, completely resembling and representing one another. Grace is a *living word*, and the word is figured, *limned* grace. As we have heard, so have we seen and found it; such a soul can produce the *duplicate* of the word, and so adjust all things thereby. The first original expression of divine truth is not in the word, no not as given out from the infinite abyss of divine wisdom and veracity, but
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it is first hid, laid up, and expressed in the person of Christ. HE is the first pattern of truth, which from him is expressed in the *word*, and *from, and by the word impressed* on the hearts of believers; so that as it hath pleased God that all the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge should be in him*, dwell in him, have their principal residence in him, Col. ii. 3, so the whole word is but a revelation of the *Truth in Christ*, or an expression of his image and likeness to the sons of men. Thus we are said to *learn the truth as it is in Jesus*, Eph. iv. 21. It is *in Jesus originally*, and really, and from him it is communicated unto us by the word. We are thereby *taught*, and do learn it; for thereby, as the apostle proceeds, *we are renewed in the spirit of our mind*, and do put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, v. 23, 24. First, the truth is in Jesus; then it is expressed in the word; *this word*, learned and believed, becomes *grace in the heart*, every way answering unto the Lord Christ his *image*, from whom this *transforming truth* did thus proceed. Nay, this is carried by the apostle yet higher, namely, unto God the Father himself, whose *image* Christ is, and believers his, through the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord;" whereunto add, chap. iv. 6. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." The first pattern or example of all truth and holiness is God himself: hereof Christ is the *image*, ver. 4. Christ is the image of God, "The brightness of his glory and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. "The
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image of the invisible God," Col. i. 15. Hence we are said to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; because he, being *his image*, the love, grace, and truth of the Father are represented and made conspicuous in him. For we are said to behold it *in his face*, because of the open and *illustrious* manifestation of the glory of God in him. And how do we behold this glory? in a glass (as in a glass) that is, in the gospel, which hath the image and likeness of Christ, who is the image of God, reflected upon it, and communicated unto it. So have we traced truth and grace, from the person of the Father, unto the Son as *Mediator*, and thence transfused it into the word. In the Father it is *essentially*, in Jesus Christ *originally* and *exemplarily*, and in the word as in a *transcript* or copy. But doth it abide there? No! God *by the word of the gospel* shines into our hearts. He irradiates our minds with a saving light into it, and apprehension of it. And what thence ensues? The soul of a believer is *changed into the same image*, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost, chap. iii. 18, that is, the *likeness* of Christ implanted on the word, is impressed on the soul itself, whereby it is renewed into the image of God, whereunto it was at first created. This brings all into perfect harmony*."

ESSAY

* See Dr. Owen on the 130th Psalm, p. 168—170. Quarto edition.

ESSAY II.

ON THE NATURE OF FAITH.

—One faith, Eph. iv. 5.

INTRODUCTION.

It has much prevailed as a fashionable sentiment, though it displays great ignorance of human wretchedness, and the vast extent of the holy law, that if we walk before God according to that light which is afforded us, either by nature, or religious instruction, our services will be pleasing to God, and without doubt we shall be happy with him for ever. From hence it has been argued, that if it be true that man can please God here, and enjoy him hereafter, by doing the best he can, there can be no necessity for him to trouble himself about those matters of *opinion*, about which even the wise, the learned, and the religious, are so much divided. Yea, it has been thought that an attention to those things has been the grand cause of the present glaring declension in PIETY. But surely such are not aware, that this sentiment is immediately opposed, and effectually overthrown, by the unerring word of God, which declares that *without FAITH it is impossible to please him*; and also that *there is no acceptable worship without it; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. Which includes, not only a belief that

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there is a God, which the devils believe and tremble at, but that he is such an one as the scriptures represent him to be. To form ideas of the great God contrary to his true character, and to worship him according to our own false imaginations, is to worship we know not what; is to worship, in fact, an imaginary god. All such worship, therefore, although attended with the formalities of invocation, adoration, confession, petition, supplication, dedication, &c. and with the most animated harangues, about the excellencies of virtue, and the extensive rewards of piety, or even of the happiness and comfort of the people of God, is not only unprofitable; being unmixed with faith, but odious and abominable in the sight of God. Isaiah lxvi. 3, 4. Rom. xiv. 23. Psalm l. 21.

Again: true holiness, whether of heart or conversation, cannot possibly be without *faith*, for in reality faith is the grand source from whence it flows. Such is the inseparable connection betwixt faith and sanctification, that where *works* do not appear, faith is dead; and where *faith* does not dwell, works are dead also. Works, therefore, without faith in Christ, however splendid, are of no account at all in the sight of God; and the heart not being purified by faith, being naturally polluted, cannot but bring forth corrupt fruits, even as a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit.

Further: faith is essentially necessary to salvation. The scripture teaches us, that there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the sacred name of Jesus Christ, and most solemnly avers, *He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God*, John iii. 18—36; and

and notwithstanding the most decent appearance among men, unbelievers are ranked in that black list of characters, that are excluded the kingdom of heaven. Luke xii. 46, Rev. xvi. 8.

The necessity and importance of proceeding with the greatest care, in our inquiries about faith, will appear, if we add to the above considerations, that *all men have not faith*—that there is such a thing as a dead faith—a feigned faith, &c.—that, in reality, there is but *one faith* that will profit the soul. Yet if we attend to the prevailing cavils in the professing world about faith, it will not be wondered at, that men of sense who have no fear of God before their eyes, reject every system of religion as a mere farce, or that *deism* should so much prevail in our day. For while they behold *that faith*, which is in general acknowledged essential to salvation, made a matter of doubtful disputation; by some *any thing*, by others *nothing*; by a third class, *every thing*; and by a fourth, *worse than nothing*; they cannot think that *all* are right; nor can they think it consistent to suppose, that the God of nature, the fountain of all intelligence, would give a revelation to his creatures that was altogether unintelligible; and if persons were not led more by fashion and custom (for it is become rather indecent to be of no religion) in their religious profession, than solid reflection; they would rather reject all religion, and commence Deists, or renounce the vain jangling of the professing world, and become Christians indeed, by receiving that truth which is able to save their souls. It remains, therefore, that there is no consistent medium between antient apostolic Christianity, and downright infidelity; and accordingly, in strict truth, in his sight who searches the heart, there are but two sorts of

men in Christendom ; and at the day of judgment it will appear so to all the world. Now we are divided into a great variety of sects and parties, but *then* of all these sects and parties, there shall appear but two sorts of men, *believers*, and *unbelievers*. And then that most remarkable saying of Jesus Christ will take effect and be fulfilled. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be damned.* See Bellamy's Essay on the Gospel, p. 252.

SECTION I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE VARIOUS NOTIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF FAITH.

FAITH, in the Scripture account of it, is a very simple, intelligible thing. But as it is retailed out in the professing world, it is sometimes so cut and trimmed, so changed and metamorphosed, that it is hard to say, after all the definitions and directions that have been given, what it is, wherein it consists, or how it is to be performed ! Some notice, however, may be taken of the names which have been given it, in some of its transmutations, though fully to explain their genuine import, our skill would fail us in attempting, 1 Tim. i, 6, 7. Faith then, as it appears in human writings, has among several others, obtained the following epithets, viz. historical faith, temporary faith, the faith of reliance, the faith of affiance, the faith of application, the faith of approbation, the direct, the reflex, the recumbent, the courageous

ous, the venturesome, and the triumphant, acts of faith. It is also represented by some as having, and putting into action, eyes, ears, mouth, arms, hands, fingers, legs, and feet.—To describe these various kinds of faith, and to give direction when each of these acts should be put forth, or which of these members should be exerted, has served to employ the time, talents, and ingenuity of many, though, after all, few of them, if any, have condescended to make it appear, how their notion of faith is consistent, either with the scripture definition thereof, or the use of the term in common life. Fearing, therefore, lest I should get involved in a labyrinth of inextricable difficulties, should I attempt to explain the above terms, and indeed, not seeing what use my labours would be of, had I talents to perform it, I shall leave that part of the work to those that have more time on their hands than I have, and whose reputation and interest may lie more in the use of them, than mine happens to do. However, a few of the most intelligible definitions that have been given may be considered.

First: it has been received as a common axiom, for the use of the weak and wavering, who nevertheless wish to think well of themselves in religious concerns, that the *desire* of grace, is grace; and so, that the *desire* of faith, is faith. “So if there be but a willing mind to this service it is accepted.”—Without doubt, where the true grace of God is known, there will be an earnest desire after its increase, it being a living principle in the soul. But surely this is a very unwarrantable way of proceeding, either in defining faith, or leading those who wish to know whether they have believed, or not, to a fair trial. The human heart is deceitful above all things, and is ever ready to

fancy what is most agreeable; and indeed there are but few under a religious profession, but are ready to think, that they sincerely desire and endeavour to believe, though they are not *able* to perform their desire. Surely then we are not allowed to say, that *every desire* of faith is faith; this would be too vague. The desire then must be limited, and of course qualified. Without doubt it should be, in order to prove itself genuine, an humble, penitent, sincere, earnest, and affectionate desire. But there are some very material objections to this notion of faith; First:—It leads those who think they have such a desire, to presume upon it. If a sense of guilt trouble the conscience, nothing but that which fairly atones for sin can effectually remove it. But sinners are naturally disaffected to the gospel hope, and would rather catch at any thing for present relief, than give up every good thought of themselves, and be relieved from that which is equally free for the profligate, as for the morally decent. To lead sinners therefore to take peace, or encouragement, from the workings of their own minds (which, while in a state of nature, are nothing better than the working of pride) is to establish them in their enmity to the gospel hope; and this cannot be done without confirming them in presumption. Again: it tends to, and often actually does, involve those for whose relief it is intended, in greater distress, since it is told them that the desire must be *qualified*. The distressed person is led to seek within himself, for the approved qualities of this desire; but finding so much of the world there, so many interruptions in his devotion, so many instances of deceit in his heart, &c. either he comes to a conclusion that he has not *such* a desire, or has it not to that degree, which is thought

thought necessary, in order to constitute a *right* desire. This he sincerely laments; yet lives in sad suspense from day to day, waiting and praying, as he is encouraged, for this desire. Sometimes he thinks (especially under preaching) he has obtained it, and *then* hope, joy, and comfort, begin to arise. Anon all these pleasing symptoms are cut down, dried up, and withered! then his life hangs in doubt, and were it not that he is told by his miserable comforters, that to sincerely lament these things is a token for good, his soul would be driven into black despair unless it could obtain some temporary ease, by mingling again with the world. It needs not be told, at least to those who have had access to *class-meetings*, and meetings for relating experiences, how common this method of comforting them that mourn, is in our day. But ah! how foreign to the hope set before us in the gospel! In fact it is neither law nor gospel. Neither works nor grace. But a mere device of Satan to blind the minds of them that believe not, 2 Cor. x. 12. For

Further; the thing itself is contrary to scripture and common sense. When a person says, "I desire to believe," * nothing more pertinent can

* What is here supposed, is a great mistake, and gross absurdity; even that men may sincerely choose and desire those spiritual duties of love, acceptance, choice, rejection, &c. consisting in the exercise of the will itself, or in the disposition and inclination of the heart; and yet not be able to perform or exert them. This is absurd, because it supposes, that a man directly, properly, and sincerely, inclines to have an inclination, which at the same time is contrary to his inclination, and that is to suppose him not to be inclined to that which he is inclined to. If a man in the disposition and acts of his will does properly and directly fall in with those duties, he therein virtually performs them; for the duties themselves consist in that very thing, they consist in the state and acts of the will being so formed and directed. If the soul properly and sincerely falls in with

can be replied than, why then don't you believe? Does some sovereign power, some fatal necessity prevent you? Or have you a sincere desire to believe what God has said, only there is not sufficient evidence thereof; the salvation is desirable, but not sufficiently proved to be true? Rather does not your unbelief proceed from ignorance, and a consequent disinclination to believe? Without doubt it does. But to convince of this is a work, which he only, whose name is ALMIGHTY, can perform. Therefore it is said by way of apology, that such *desire* to know the gospel. Then surely, the nature, design and evidence of the gospel salvation should be laid before them, instead of putting them to pore upon their own hearts, in order to extract some kind of comfort from their supposed *desires*.

But, as before hinted, the plain fact is, the gospel hope is thought to be too weak to support them; and therefore this humble,, sincere, earnest, and affectionate desire, is to believe, not in Christ alone, but that they are the children of the Most High, the peculiar favourites of heaven. The desire, therefore, may be considered as an important struggle between *conscience*, which bears witness that they *are not* the children of God, and which the holy Spirit in the word confirms—and the aspirations of their *pride*, under the influence of that antient doctrine,

with a certain proposed act of will or choice, the soul therein makes that choice its own. Even as when a moving body falls in with a proposed direction of its motion, that is the same thing as to move in that direction. That which is called a *desire* and *willingness* for these inward duties, in such as do not perform them, has respect to those duties only indirectly and remotely, and is improperly represented as a willingness for them, not only because it respects those good volitions only in a distant view, and with respect to future time: but also because evermore, not these things themselves, but something else, that is alien and foreign, is the object that terminates these volitions and desires.—See *Edwards, on Free Will, p. 131.*

trine, *Ye shall be as gods*. Now as the *former* prevails, conviction, fear, shame and torment, are the painful consequences. But when the *latter* gains the ascendancy, and so the conscience becomes blinded or scared thereby, then some kind of peace, joy, and comfort, are its attendants. But if such persons are, through divine teaching, mercifully brought to obtain peace by the blood of the Redeemer's cross; they will then perceive, that all their previous desires, prayers, resolutions, and endeavours, were not in reality after God's salvation, but aimed at *doing* or *feeling* something from which, or through which, their peace and hope might be derived,

Once more: the person who is seeking faith, or desiring to believe, must either be a believer or an unbeliever; for between these two there is no consistent medium. He cannot be a believer, or else what he professes to believe, would give rest to his soul. *For being justified by faith, he would have peace with God*, and cease from those fruitless works, &c. He must therefore be an unbeliever: and *as such* is in a *carnal state*. But the carnal mind is enmity against God. Therefore, though it is natural enough, for one, under the alarms of conscience, sincerely to desire *peace*; it is neither scriptural nor rational to say, he desires to believe the truth of Christ, or is seeking faith in him. He does not understand or know what faith in Christ is; how then can he seek it? His heart rises in enmity when the pure gospel is preached; how then can he desire it? Would it not much better become Christian teachers, when they have to deal with such persons as those under consideration, to copy after the example of Christ in his treatment of the like characters? Mat. xix. 16—21, &c.

Faith has also been defined a *condition* of justification, or that act of the mind which God requires us to exert, instead of obeying the whole law, and is frequently called the obedience to the *new law*. This sentiment has been sufficiently exposed by those who have engaged in the Arminian controversies ; and stands so much opposed to salvation by grace, that no one can receive it, but he whose mind is blinded by the god of this world, and who is under a strong delusion to believe a lie. It indeed comes under the specious recommendation of that doctrine, which would seem to wear the face of more than ordinary holiness, but is in fact an abominable Antinomian tenet, and aims at making void the law. As to faith, it is as foreign to the scripture view of it, as darkness is to light. I shall therefore offer no other refutation of this notion, than Paul's words, Rom. iv. 4, 5. *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

Again: it has been said that—"Faith is not simply the believing of any sentence that is written, or that can be thought upon!"—It is seldom expressed in these very words, though the same thing is to be understood, when we are told that—"Faith is a saving grace, implanted in the heart at regeneration (and must therefore be previous to understanding and believing the gospel) by the Spirit of God, and is a disposition or readiness in the human mind, to believe the gospel."—But this faith, whatever it be, cannot be the faith of the operation of God ; because that comes by hearing the word of God. It is admitted, that unfeigned faith is a work of the Spirit, and that salvation is inseparably connected with

with it; yet scripture and common sense forbid us thinking, that faith can exist without a testimony. The absurdity of this notion, about a disposition in the mind towards the gospel, previous to a true understanding thereof, has been shewn in the sixth section of the first essay.

By others faith has been defined, a belief that we have a right to salvation in preference to others—a belief that we are the elect of God—or a persuasion that Christ shed his blood for *me in particular*, or that I shall go to heaven, &c. That believers do come to a knowledge of their personal interest in Christ, and the things that they believe and hope in, is granted, and will be considered in its proper place. But it is most certain, that carnal men may and do embolden themselves, upon false notions, to use the most confident expressions about their personal interest in the favour of God. Such as, “I know so surely as that there is a God in heaven, that he is *my* God, and that I shall as surely go to heaven as if I were there,” &c. Who more confident than the Pharisees? they had no doubt of God being their father; and yet, who more blind to the knowledge of the true God than they? If it be faith, to believe our relation to God, to call ourselves *the dear people of his choice*, and appropriate all the blessings of eternal life to ourselves; then the Pharisees had faith in a very eminent degree. But to suppose that faith consists in a firm persuasion of our own interest, is, in effect, the very same thing as to say, faith is a believing that we believe. To this it will be objected, that wicked men, deceiving their own souls, in believing a lie, is no argument against the appropriating act of faith upon the grant of the gospel. True, if that were all the ground of objection.

objection. But it wants evidence from scripture to support that notion, that God promises eternal life to *every hearer* of the gospel, or which in fact is the same thing, that *every hearer* has a right to believe that Christ died for *him in particular*. It is granted that the gospel proclaims salvation *indefinitely*, and declares that *every believer* thereof shall be saved, and that *whosoever* believes on Christ, hath everlasting life; yet it gives no ground for any one to assure himself in his first believing, that Christ and heaven are infallibly his. Every believer of the gospel is confident that whosoever believeth on Christ shall be saved, and that it may be said of every one who is saved that Christ loved him, and gave himself for him *in particular*, while yet he is not confident that this is true of *himself*, because it remains to be proved that he *has* believed, and that it is *the gospel of Christ* which he does believe*. And since it is not any thing about ourselves that we are immediately called to believe, but the testimony that God has given of his son; our confidence, if it be that which the gospel produces, is not in ourselves, nor of the goodness of our state, but in the sufficiency of that salvation which the scriptures *indefinitely* proclaim. Besides, some have rejoiced in the word of the gospel, who have afterwards revolted from their profession—many think they believe the truth, who are at the same

* When a man believes the gospel, he must be immediately conscious that he does so; though this requires to be farther proved by the fruits of his faith: but if it also “remains to be proved that it is *the gospel of Christ* that he does believe,” he must either in the mean time be suspending his belief of the gospel till he obtain that proof, or else he must be believing it without proof. A proper attention to the difference between the evidence of *our believing it*, would have prevented this inaccuracy. Yet every man ought to take heed lest he believe a false gospel.—Ed.

same time holding some fatal delusion ; and it is no where ascertained in the word of God, that Christ died for the actual transgressions of any person in particular. But the MYSTERY of this sort of faith is set before us in the following lines. “ Let it be well observed, that the reason why we are to assure ourselves in our faith, that God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to us particularly, is not because it is a truth before we believe it, but because it becometh a certain truth when we believe it, and because it will never be true except we do, in some measure persuade and assure ourselves that it is so. We have no absolute promise or declaration in the scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular ; neither do we know it to be true already either by scripture, or sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves of it : yea, we are without Christ’s salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the curse and wrath of God. Only I shall prove, that we are bound, by the command of God, thus to assure ourselves : and the scripture doth sufficiently warrant us, that we shall not deceive ourselves in believing a lie,—but according to our faith so shall it be to us. This is a strange kind of assurance, far different from ordinary kinds; and therefore no wonder if it should be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and assaulted with many doubtings. We are concerned to believe other things on the clear evidence that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no ;—so that we cannot deny our assent without rebelling against the light of our senses, reason, or conscience. But here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts by the evidence of the things ; but we must work it out in our-

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selves by the assistance of the Spirit of God, and thereby we bring our own thoughts into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. None but God can justly require of us this kind of assurance, because he only *calleth those things that are not, as though they were*, he only can give existence to those things that yet are not, and make a thing to be true upon our believing it, that was not true before." *

It is acknowledged in the above citation, that there is no evidence, of any kind, that God gives Christ and his salvation to *any one in particular*, before we absolutely assure ourselves of it—that *this is not a truth before we believe it*, and moreover, *will never be true except we do persuade and assure ourselves that it is so*; but that which *was not true before, becometh a certain truth when we believe it!!!* Yet it is confessed this doctrine of faith will not hold good in any other things; for we are concerned to believe them *on the clear evidence we have that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no*. To believe without evidence is not *faith*, but *fancy* and presumption, whether the thing believed be human or divine. And it is most certain, that the very attempt to persuade persons to believe, without knowing what they are to believe, or, without plain evidence, that what they are called to believe is true, whether they believe it or no, would be hissed out of the world as an affront to common sense in any thing but religious matters; in which, grievous to think,

* Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, 8th edition, pages 173, 174. The very singular nature of this quotation will sufficiently apologize for receding from the method I have all along adopted of concealing the author's name from whom I have quoted. And unless I had referred to the book in which this *very deep* sentiment is maintained, I should have feared being suspected by some of having fabricated it myself.

think, nothing is too absurd to be propagated, or to ridiculous to be received! Is it then peculiar to the God of Heaven, the source of intelligence, to set *falsehoods* before his creatures, to be transformed into *truths* by a confident belief of them, and to *bind* them by his command to perform the strange operation? Far be it from him! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

I conclude this general view of the various notions of faith in the professing world, with observing, that divine truth is always consistent with itself, and *evidence* is its inseparable characteristic; whereas falsehood wears many faces, and sets the invention of its propagator upon the rack to cover its hateful appearance with the mask of truth, in order to blind the understanding, scar the conscience, and delude the soul. Whether this approbation therefore be supported by supposed qualifications—the imaginary “deed of gift”—or the courageous act of faith without evidence either from scripture, sense, or reason, it is most certainly essentially different from believing the record that God has given of his Son.—So that however well pleased any may be, in a full persuasion that they have *exerted the appropriating act*, unless more solid evidence of their actual interest in Christ be given, their claim will, in the end, be found miserably deficient. And though persons may strain every nerve in laboring to believe that their state is good, or to make that true which is not true before they believe it, it will remain an unchangeable truth that, *he that believeth not* (that very gospel which Christ and his apostles preached) *shall be damned*.—Seeing then that there is but *one faith*, and that without *it* we cannot please God, acceptably worship him, or eternally en-

joy him ; and since those various and opposite notions of faith prevailing in the professing world, cannot all be right ; it follows that there is danger of being deceived ; this cautions us to inquire, wherein the very essence of the ONE FAITH consists ; which, when known, in obedience to the exhortation, we should contend earnestly for.

SECTION II.

ON THE FAITH OF THE OPERATION OF GOD.

✓ THE inquiry in this Section is, principally, wherein the nature of that faith consists which may with strict propriety be stiled *like precious* with the apostles ; and in order to avoid an error in the proposition, and so to prevent stumbling at the threshold, I shall rest satisfied with such a definition of it as the BIBLE affords. And surely, when the unerring Spirit of truth condescends to define, and to point out a line of illustration ; it manifests much pride and ignorance in any one to swerve from it. Nor is it to be wondered that any who swerve from the scriptural definition, should also err from faith unfeigned, and turn aside to vain jangling.

According to that very accurate divine, PAUL, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,** Heb. xi. 1. Here then

* It may not be improper here to observe, that this text is, by some, differently translated. They say, the original word (*hypostasis*) which is rendered *substance*, should be translated
confidence

then we are presented with a full, clear, and comprehensive definition of *gospel faith*: that faith which is of the operation of God, and without which we cannot please him. It consists of two parts, viz. *the truth believed*, which is the substance of things hoped for; and *the belief of the truth*, which is the evidence of things not seen. † How plain, how rational, how worthy of the God of intelligence! We read nothing here of the direct, or the reflex acts, nor of making a falsehood truth, by confidently believing it. Here is nothing said of

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confidence, as in the margin, and in 2 Cor. ix. 4. ch. xi. 17. Heb. iii. 14. This confidence, say they, respects *things hoped for*, i. e. future good things promised, and is illustrated by the faith of the patriarchs. The word (*elenchos*) *evidence*, they translate *conviction*, i. e. of *things not seen*, which are more comprehensive than *things hoped for*, as they include every thing that God has either testified or promised—things past and present, as well as things to come. So that both the words *confidence* and *conviction*, according to this view, are expressive of simple *belief*; and the object of this belief is the truth, whether testified or promised.—See M'Lean's *Treatise on the Apostolic Commission*, p. 81. See also a little piece entitled, "*The belief of the Gospel saving Faith*," by the same author, p. 5, 6.—Ed.

† The author explains the apostle's definition of faith thus; "Now faith is *the truth believed*, and *the belief of the truth*." That the word *faith* is used in scripture in a metonymical sense, i. e. as importing *the truth to be believed*, must be very evident to an attentive reader, Acts vi. 7. chap. xxiv. 24. 24. Gal. i. 23. Philip i. 27. Jude, ver. 3. Pev. ii. 13. &c. And that its general acceptance is the *belief of the truth*, is equally clear, and probably will not be denied by any; so that whatever may be the true meaning of *this passage*, Mr. Ecking's ideas are well supported by the scriptures, and the doctrines he has advanced in the remainder of the section, will remain unaffected by any criticisms upon it.

It may not be improper however to observe, that in illustrating the second part of his definition of faith, he has gone into a slight inconsistency, and has departed from the idea with which he set out; for he has made *the evidence of things not seen*, to consist in *the truth to be believed*, and not in our *belief* thereof. So that, although he at first explains the word in a double sense, yet he has for the most part, as the reader may perceive, adhered to one idea.—Ed.

the personal appropriating act, neither is faith and its effects confounded.—But I shall proceed to consider a little more particularly, this truly excellent definition of the faith of God's elect, which the inspired apostle has with plainness and clearness laid before all men.

First : *Faith is the substance of things hoped for.* The Bible exhibits one harmonious, consistent, beautiful system of truth. The whole of which, in all its glorious parts, is only a transcript or copy of what was drawn out in the character of Jesus Christ: so that the truth as it is in him, or the doctrine of Christ in the scriptures, of which many summaries are given, contains the *sum* or *substance* of the whole compass of evangelical truth ; and the hope which is laid up for the saints in heaven, is heard of in the word of the truth of the gospel, Col. i. 5. which is the substance of what things they expect hereafter, or the substantial foundation of their hope. Faith then, in the first part of the definition under consideration, evidently intends the *things* to be believed: and that the term is often used in this sense, in things human and divine, will appear by having reference to a few instances. Laws and treaties made and confirmed, betwixt one nation and another, are called the faith of those nations. To preserve them inviolably is called keeping the faith ; and for either party to recede from, or break, any of them, is called a breach of faith ; and these laws, treaties, &c. are the substantial ground of hope and confidence to each nation. When a person has declared his sentiments upon any point, those things that he has testified of are properly called his creed or his faith : and it becomes very common to denominate such a declaration, *a confession of faith*. If the person professes his hope of salvation in the things he

he has held forth, then it is plain, that his faith is the substance of his hope ; and the nature of his hope will be as his faith is. The term is frequently used in the Bible in this sense, as Rom. iii. 3. *Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect ?* Gal. i. 23. *The faith which he once destroyed ;* and what the apostle preached was *Jesus Christ and him crucified*. In this sense it was used Gal. iii. 2. 5 12. 23. 25. and nothing but the doctrine of Christ, which, by the writings of the prophets and apostles, were delivered to them, could be intended when Jude, ver. 3. exhorts to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*.

Calvin, in his Instit. b. 3. chap. 2. § 13. observes, that “ Oftentimes faith signifies the sound doctrine of religion, as in the place that we now alledge (1 Tim. i. 5.) And in the same epistle Paul will have the deacons to *hold fast the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience*. Again, when he published the falling away of certain from the faith. But on the other side he saith, Timothy was nourished up with the *words of faith*. Again, where he saith that profane vanities and oppositions, falsely named sciences, are the cause that many depart from the faith : whom in another place he calleth reprobate touching faith. As again he chargeth Titus, saying, warn them *that they may be sound in the faith*. By soundness he meaneth nothing else but purity of doctrine, which is easily corrupted, and brought out of kind by the lightness of men. Even because in Christ, whom faith possesseth, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Therefore faith is worthily extended to signify *the whole sum of heavenly doctrine, from which it cannot be separated*.”*

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* One would think that the greater part of those who call

There are many things spoken of in the sacred writings concerning faith, that must be understood in the above sense. As first: our resurrection from a death in trespasses and sins, Col. ii. 12. This cannot intend any act of the human mind, under any influence whatever, for *of his own will begat he us by the word of truth*. Faith in this sense comes by hearing the word of God. But this shows how faith comes to us; not how we approach to it. Our ears are not previously disposed to hearken: but the almighty voice of the Son of God goes forth and unstops the deaf ears. Even as he once said to one literally deaf, *Be opened*. And straightway his ears were opened. But this sentiment has been considered in the former Essay.

Again: it is faith taken in this sense, that is the matter of *justification* before God, and in the sinner's conscience. No fact comes better established in the word of God, than that the matter of a sinner's justification is the righteousness of Christ imputed. It is established firm as Jehovah's throne; nor can the deepest subtilties of hell move it. Yet we are expressly said to be justified *by faith*, Rom. v. 1. chap. iv. 3. —9. and the divinity of men would teach us, though nothing can be more palpably absurd and dangerous, that faith justifies us *as an instrument*; and many by acting faith, as an instrument to their justification, are insensibly led,

themselves *Calvinists*, are shamefully deficient in knowing wherein Calvin's doctrine consists; or should we find them maintaining the notion of faith being in the heart before we understand, receive, or even hear the word of God? But it has happened to Calvinism, as it has long been with Christianity, — many are fond of the name, for the sake of credit, reputation, and interest, who yet are as ignorant of the doctrine, and as far from following the practices of the first Christians, as an idolatrous pagan.

led, upon many occasions, to substitute these *acts of faith*, in the place of those *divine acts* which wrought out the all-sufficient righteousness. But if it be faith, as an instrument, that Abraham is said to be justified by, then it would seem that it is by the instrumentality of Abraham's faith, that all his seed are justified ! For it is the very same thing that justifies him and his children ; see Rom. iv. 3—8. compared with verses 22—25. To the same signification are the following scriptures : Rom. iii. 38. Gal. ii. 16 chap. iii. 24. It is what the sinner believes then, or the work of Christ alone separate from all its effects and fruits, that justifies.* It has been very common to use the phrases “ justifying faith,” and “ saving faith ;” and it is to be hoped many use them, without connecting any erroneous sentiment therewith. Yet it is plain others would be understood, that it is some peculiar *sort* or *manner* of believing that justifies. But if the heartiness, seriousness, or sincerity of our believing, have any influence whatever in our justification, it cannot be said to be *freely by grace through the redemption which is in Jesus*

Further : Faith in the sense under consideration is what believers *live* by, according as it is written, *The just shall live by his faith*. Some are apt to imagine that the vigorous actings of the soul are here intended. Such live (such a life as it is) by the workings of their own mind, which they call faith. But surely this is not the life of faith pointed to in the scripture ; far otherwise. The soul that is spiritually quickened, lives a much nobler life than this. He lives by his faith it is true ; but what is the believer's faith ?

* Though the work of Christ alone is the meritorious ground of our justification, yet we must ever remember, that it is only he that *believeth*; that is justified by it.—Ed.

faith? Undoubtedly Christ as he is revealed in the word. *He is our life*, Col. iii. 4. and *This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am (says Christ) the living bread which came down from Heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.* He, therefore, who lives by any thing else, whatever his frames, feelings, his supposed humble breathings, holiness, sweet sensations, &c. is in the estimation of him who cannot err, a dead sinner. *Jesus said unto him, verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, ye have NO LIFE IN YOU*, John vi. 53.

Once more: under this part of the definition, we are to conceive of faith sanctifying. Acts xxvi. 18. *Sanctified by faith which is in me.* Chap. xv. 9. *Purifying their hearts by faith.* Nothing else can be intended but the truth believed, according to our Lord's prayer, John xvii. 17. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.* Chap. xv. 3, *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*, 1 Cor i. 30. Eph. v. 26. Thus the precious truth as it is in Jesus, dwelling in the heart, produces every good disposition, and prompts to every good work. It dwells in the understanding, and enlightens it. It possesseth the conscience, and purges it from dead works. It prevails in the will, and disposes it to pray, *Father, thy will be done.* It engages the affections, and regulates and influences them, and of course the outward conversation will be adorned with every good word and work. Such are the triumphs, and such the correspondent effects of divine truth in the soul.

The second part therefore of the apostle's definition

definition of faith, leads us to conceive of it as *The evidence of things not seen*. From hence it appears, that they who chuse to define faith—a believing, without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason, differ essentially from the apostle. Paul held no such crude notions. As a man of good sense, as a pupil of Gamaliel; and as a disciple of the Holy Ghost, he knew the absurdity of proposing any thing to be believed, without *evidence* of its existence and reality.

Equally absurd is their notion who, in order to appear more than ordinarily accurate, censure and solemnly condemn the idea of believing being an act of the mind. It is acknowledged, indeed, that very unscriptural sentiments have prevailed about *acts of faith*, when they are supposed to arise from some previous principle, well disposing the mind of unbelievers towards the gospel. Yet, if it be admitted possible for the soul of man to *act* (and who will deny that it does ?) there is nothing more properly an *act* of the mind, than believing a truth ; in which first the mind perceives it, then considers the evidence offered to support it ; and finally gives assent to it. And can this comport with inactivity ? We must either say then, that the soul *acts* in believing the gospel ; or that the soul is an inactive spirit, which is absurd.

No inquiries are of greater importance in treating upon faith than, *What is truth ?* and, upon what *kind* of evidence is the truth to be received ? In regard to the first, Christ says, I AM THE TRUTH. And what he means by that the New Testament is intended to illustrate ; which has been considered in the former essay. As to the evidence upon which the truth is to be received, it might be observed in general, that evidence should always be of the same nature

ture with what is proposed to be believed. Are we to receive the gospel, because, or just as far as, it is agreeable to reason? No; for then reason would be set up to inform us what God *ought* to say. And as what is called reason, wears an evil eye to the truth, it is not to be supposed that we can receive it in the love of it, upon this evidence. Are we then from some impressions upon the mind which are thought to be the convictions of the Holy Spirit? No; for then we should receive nothing from God, but what in *some certain way* or other we feel impressed upon our minds. However, many find it *convenient* to believe upon this kind of evidence; because then they can chuse what part of the word they like best, and readily avoid what is disagreeable to them, or is likely to injure their reputation among professors, and hurt their worldly interest. Are we upon the evidence, that the fathers, the church, the wise and learned, or the great and pious have produced? No; for then we should acknowledge masters upon earth, contrary to Christ's command: neither would this be hearing his voice, but the voice of the learned, the pious, &c. and would at best, be but "*human faith*." Are we to receive the truth, upon the force of a philosophical argument, or a mathematical, or logical demonstration? By no means: for this kind of evidence is unsuitable to the nature of the testimony, which is not written in the words of man's wisdom.

The truth to be believed being *divine*, the evidence upon which it is received must be of the same nature. And *the gospel has its most proper evidence in itself*. The majesty which clothes the sacred pages evidently declares, that God himself speaks there. When the Spirit of truth opens the understanding, by the entrance
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of the word, to understand and know the truth as it is in Jesus, the light, power, and evidence thereof produces a confidence in the same. We believe and are sure, because the faithful and true witness has spoken it, 1 John, v. 10, and this certainty of soul, grounded upon unchanging veracity, is the evidence not seen. However as our knowledge of the gospel admits of degrees, so our faith may be denominated weak or strong, and we be stiled, agreeably thereunto, babes, young men, or fathers in Christ. Believing then, whether the things believed are human or divine, is nothing more than a conviction of the soul, that those things are true. This conviction is nothing more than the force of satisfactory evidence. And this evidence, in the gospel, is in the things believed.

It has rather inconsiderately been said by some, that what we understand we cannot help believing: for this is not literally true. Two persons may equally understand the nature of a proposition, while the one receives it as true, and the other rejects it as false. I may clearly understand the error of my friend; but does it follow that I cannot help believing it? Yet it certainly is impossible, that we should understand a proposition to be *true*, and not believe it, whether the nature of the thing be agreeable or displeasing.—When it is said all faith supposes evidence, it is not to be understood, that every thing spoken of in the scripture is to be comprehended in all its parts, powers, and qualities, in an *absolute sense* before we believe it; or that we should reject what we cannot fathom. For then we must not only disbelieve that there is a God, but also every thing that necessarily belongs to him; yea, and ten thousand things in nature beside. We believe that God IS; but how he exists, our understandings were not

framed to conceive, nor are we called to believe. So there is sufficient evidence, both human and divine, that the scriptures are the word of God, though many sacred truths are only known in their nature and extent, to him who searches the deep things of God; for even Paul himself, in the view of them, not being able to explore, cries out, *O the depth!* Yet it should be observed that, He who is perfectly *wise*, and cannot be deceived; *faithful* and *good*, and will not deceive his creatures, has revealed nothing but what is worthy of himself. He does not bind his intelligent creatures to believe real inconsistencies: for though the sublime truths are above human reason, they are not inconsistent with it.

But what evidence have we in the *true sayings of God*, of that which man believes for his salvation?

First: there is evidence of the *sufficiency* of Christ's work to save to the **UTTERMOST**, the most guilty, the most polluted, and the most abandoned wretch on this side hell. This pleasing fact is confirmed in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, wherein the infinite dignity of his person, obedience and sacrifice, is demonstrated: for the declared import of this is, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* No person that calls this in question believes the gospel: yet every one does this, who disbelieves the sufficiency of the atonement to save *him*. Again: there is evidence of the *freeness* of this salvation. The report of it is spread amongst *all* nations, and directed to *all sorts* of persons without distinction. All its blessings are to be partaken of *freely*, as the bestowment of sovereign grace to the guilty sinner, *as such*. So that the rude
Barbarian

Barbarian, and the savage Scythian, have an equal right to partake of this salvation, with the Jew, the polite Greek, or the most decent Moralists. And when the evidence of the gospel strikes the mind, when a sinner is once convinced of the veracity of God—that the scriptures are his word—and that sinners *as such* are invited to partake of the benefits of grace freely; he will need nothing more to convince and satisfy his soul, and cause him to believe on the name of the Son of God. He will not wait for any new revelation or assurance that God speaks to *him*; nor will he go about to *make* this true by believing it; what is written sufficiently satisfies him that *he* is not excluded. But if the indefinite extent of the gospel report be denied (and this every one denies who excludes himself), the truth is called in question, and the common salvation is disbelieved.

Further: there is sufficient evidence in the dispensation of grace, that God in the distribution of his favours is just and merciful in perfection—that in the grand exhibition of mercy, through the obedience and atonement of Christ, his law is fulfilled, honoured, magnified, and established as holy, just, and good—sin is demonstrated to be an infinite evil—justice, in all its tremendous forms, a lovely attribute of Deity; and all his ways are founded in righteousness, holiness, and truth. To believe a gospel that does not set forth these things, is to believe a lie; and to manifest enmity against this gospel of the kingdom, is a full proof that such are *alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them*. But to believe the truth, in its glorious connection, is the sovereign gift of heaven; those on whom it is bestowed, will not be heard saying, “My sins are too great to be pardoned,” because they believe upon un-

changing authority, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin. Nor will they be distressed for want of something as a pre-requisite, to distinguish them from the profane world, because they are persuaded that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the CHIEF of sinners. Nor will they be perplexing themselves with fruitless fears, lest they should not be elected, because they know and believe that he is faithful and true who hath said, that *Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*

The believing view of this salvation, or rather *The truth in the love of it*, dwelling in us, begets every evangelical motion of heart towards God in Christ. It leads to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity—to receive him as the free gift of God—to trust in him as the sure mercies of David, and, in a way of meditation and prayer, daily to be coming to him as unto a living stone. But the necessary fruits and happy effects of faith will be considered in the next essay. Here I only add by way of summary, that the faith which is *like precious* with that of all the apostles, has for its immediate object, *The righteousness of our God and Saviour*, 2 Peter i. 1—for its ground and salvation *The testimony of God*, 1 Thes. ii. 13, is obtained through divine teaching, as the sovereign *gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29—its peculiar effects are *Joy and peace*, 1 Peter i. 8—and its genuine evidence is *good works*, James ii. 14—26.

SECTION III.

WHEREIN ARE CONSIDERED SOME QUESTIONS WHICH MAY ARISE, AND OBJECTIONS THAT MAY BE STARTED, UPON THE FOREGOING VIEW OF FAITH.

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8 To the scripture account of salvation by faith, it has been objected, that, "This is a very easy way of going to heaven: nothing more easy than to believe. And if believing will take us to heaven, the greater part of mankind are going there." The objector, it would seem, has no other notion of the way to heaven than by *doing some great thing*. And it must be acknowledged that nothing can be more NATURAL. However the objector is *one* instance, easy as this way may seem, that *all* do not believe the gospel, or expect to be saved through the righteousness of Jesus. Instead of *all* men believing the gospel, it is but too manifest that *very few* in reality do: and that "the greater part of mankind" slight the gospel way of salvation as weak and foolish (among whom our objector must be ranked) or else think nothing at all about it: while others professing that they know God, in works deny him, and turn the grace of God into wantonness. And there are not wanting others, who, while they profess to be saved by Christ, either in plain or more ambiguous terms and ways, establish their own righteousness. But can it be strictly said that either of these classes believe that very gospel which Christ and his apostles preached? Rather, is it not manifest that they are sporting themselves with their own

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deceivings, and that, if sovereign mercy does not prevent, by giving them to understand and know the Lord, they will perish in their delusions. It is readily acknowledged that many will *say* they "Believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord," &c. when in truth they do not believe *it*, but some false representation thereof which the god of this world has impressed upon their mind, to blind them, lest the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. It has been justly observed, that *most men*, who live under the dispensation of the gospel, do wofully deceive their own souls in this matter. They do *not believe* what they profess themselves to believe, and what they think they believe. Men talk of fundamental errors; this is, to me, the most fundamental error that we can fall into. This mistake is in the foundation, and ruins the souls of those who die in it. Nothing is more common than for men to deceive themselves in this point, self-love, reputation among the religious, &c. make them rest secure. Such will avoid the clear preaching of the truth, because if some of its light break in, it discovers their error, and fills them with torment—alas for them, for they have found out a way to go quickly down into the pit!—But still in whatever way it is supposed the objection has weight, it will remain a truth established for ever, that, **HE THAT BELIEVETH SHALL BE SAVED.**

"But a person may have the clearest perception, and the most just views of the person and work of Christ, in his *head*, who does not believe on him in his *heart*." It is acknowledged that all who profess to know the Lord, do not so in truth, John viii. 54; yet *This is life eternal to know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he*

he hath sent. John xvii. 3. Such as know him are directed to glory only in this, Jer. ix. 24. and such are in a blessed state, Psalm lxxxix. 15. As to the above notion, it needs no other confutation, than for every thinking person to make the experiment, upon any point of knowledge that he has obtained; and I am of opinion that the greatest adepts in metaphysical subtilties, will find themselves puzzled to make out the distinction: though all will at once perceive that it is possible, yea, very common, for persons to *say* that with their *mouths*, which they do not understand or believe in their *hearts*; and, without doubt, this is what Paul would lead our thoughts to, Rom. x. 10. The faith of the operation of God is very different from every other kind of faith, but that difference does not consist in the *manner* of believing, but in the *nature* of the thing believed, and in the *evidence* which supports that belief; an hypocrite may have *feigned faith*, which from various motives, and to various ends, he may see it prudent to retain; and many *very sincere* persons, in their way, may have a *false faith*, by which they may deceive themselves and others: that is, they may believe a falsehood, or hold wrong notions of the truth. But then if they are *sincere*, it supposes that they believe it *with their hearts* to be true. There is no reason to doubt that there are many sincere Papists, Arians, Socinians, &c. who believe *in their hearts* that the doctrines which they severally profess, are true. Even as there were many *very sincere* in their opposition to Christ in the days of his flesh, and in the first preaching of the gospel, Acts xxvi. 9. Would it not then be talking more intelligibly to say, that when a person's profession is not productive of suitable fruits, it is plain he is not taught of God, and so does not know the truth *as it is in*
Jesus;

Jesus; than to make the above idle distinction, which is void of foundation either in scripture or common sense? Eph. iv. 20—24. 2 Peter i. 8—10.

“ But a person may believe the *doctrine* of Christ, who yet does not believe on the *person* of Christ.” It is true when faith relates simply to the existence of a person, the distinction is ever to be preserved. Many believe there were such persons as Paul and James, who do not believe their doctrine. But this weighs on the contrary side to that on which the objection would place it, for it supposes a person may believe all that is written about Jesus Christ, and yet not believe *on him* or *in him*. But Paul says, Rom. x. 14. 17. *And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?—So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* And what can we know of Christ, or what benefit can we receive from him but by and through his word? It is not the arrangement of letters or words of scripture barely that we believe, but the mind and truth of God contained therein. There is no other use, therefore, for the distinction, than to entangle and perplex persons, and to promote and cherish some kind of blind enthusiasm.

“ But if faith is nothing more than a *simple belief of the truth*, it is only what devils believe: and can the faith of devils profit us?” Such an objection as this, coming from one whose person is held in admiration, will have much more influence upon the minds of his adherents (who without doubt hate every thing that they believe belongs to the devil) than sound argument or positive scripture. Those who, in attempting to answer this objection, have pleaded that the devils only believe that there is one God; not only leave the objection unanswered, but :

but certainly have very limited notions of their creed. The apostle James plainly shews that their faith, in some respects, is more orthodox than that of many professors of religion, because the faith of the former produces terror and dreadful horror, while that of the latter leads to presumption, and awfully sears the conscience; nor have we any reason to believe otherwise, if scripture be our guide, than that devils believe every gospel truth as firmly as the true believer does: and perhaps understand the nature of the truth much more extensively. But what does this avail *them*? Christ did not take upon him the nature of *devils*. He did not become surety for, and bear the sins of, *devils*. Nor is it said to them, to *you* is the word of this salvation sent. No: unhappy creatures! they are, in awful sovereignty, though in strict justice, *reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*, Jude, ver. 6. So that though they believe and confess with Peter, that Jesus is the Son of God, Luke iv. 34. 41. Mark iii. 11. Yet they *hate* the truth, knowing that for this purpose he was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, 1 John, 3. 8. Hence we find them crying out and saying, *Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God*, Mark i. 24. But though the saving truth torments devils, it delivers sinners of the *human race* from the wrath to come. The Son of God clothed himself in the human nature, and became the Surety of his people; and the language of Scripture is, *To you, O MEN, I call, and my voice is to the SONS OF MEN*. And whosoever among men believes what devils do about the Son of God, is born of God, and shall be saved, 1 John, v. 1. Nevertheless there are not want-
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ing those among the sons of men, who make no better use of what they know about the gospel than the devils do; and who, therefore, have no more benefit from it than they have. The devils know the truth well: but they hate it—make use of every artifice to corrupt and pervert it, and bring forth fruits directly opposite to it. The Pharisees saw so much of the truth, as to hate it, speak evil of it, and seek to take Christ's life away, for bearing witness to it, and hereby manifested themselves to be the children of the devil, John viii. 40. 44. And many in our day agree with devils, to hate and pervert the truth, and persecute them that are of it; having seen so much of it as to be aware, that it does not suit their scheme of religion. Let us remember, then, that the faith of devils is this; to know so much of the truth as to join with them to hate and corrupt it; while the same truth, known in its beautiful connection, believed in its native simplicity, and therefore received in the love of it, will save the soul, and promote a godly conversation. And it will appear plain to every one, who duly considers what the apostle James says, that he does not distinguish the faith of the operation of God, from the faith of devils, by the *nature* of the thing believed, but by its *fruits*; he plainly intimates, that if we separate *love and good works* from faith, as its certain and necessary concomitants, the devils are as ORTHODOX as the most critical professor, James ii. 18. 20. chap. i 22. 27.

“But did not Simon Magus believe, who yet was a bad man?” True: but *what* did he believe? Is it replied, He believed the doctrine of Philip; without doubt he did in the sense in which he understood it. But who will say that he really *understood* the preaching of Philip? If then he did not understand that very gospel,

gospel, which was preached, but held it in a corrupt sense under a form of sound words, he cannot, with any degree of propriety, be said to have believed the gospel of Christ: for what we have no understanding of, we cannot believe, John ix. 35, 36. But that he did believe in *some sense* is true, because the word asserts it, and it is very plain wherein his mistake lay. He had not received the evidence of the *freeness* of salvation by Jesus Christ, and was ignorant of the sovereign manner in which the blessings of it are bestowed. For he thought that the gift of the Holy Ghost might be purchased with money, Acts viii. 18—24. He wondered, like some professors now, at the discoveries which he had made, or the wonders which he beheld the apostles work, but did not understand the true grace of God. Their faith, therefore, should be classed with his, who think by their *doings*, or on account of their sincere, earnest, motions of heart, &c. they are qualified for Christ, and so through the medium of these things *hope* for his mercy.

“ But is there not such a thing as believing in vain?” 1 Cor. xv. 2. Yes: * and to believe in vain is to believe something that is not true, and which therefore deceives us; to hold some error along with the truth, which tends to destroy its nature. As for instance. Those to whom the apostle wrote, believed that Christ was risen from the dead; and yet denied that there would be a resurrection of the just and of the unjust: and thereby overthrew the faith of some. The apostle shows that if this sentiment be true, that the dead rise not, the doctrine of Christ’s

* There is no such thing as believing the *gospel* in vain, unless it can be shewn that it is not true, or that Christ is not risen. It is only upon that supposition the Apostle speaks of believing in vain.—Ed.

Christ's resurrection must of consequence fall ; and so, their preaching would be vain, and the Corinthian's faith would be vain, and they would be yet in their sins, 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14. Again : If we believe that salvation from sin and hell comes *only* by the death of Christ, and yet maintain that we obtain righteousness by our legal works, or become qualified for Christ by virtue of any thing exerted by us, or wrought in us, under any name or pretence whatever ; it is plain that we have believed in vain. For if righteousness come by the law, or if we can by any means shorten the distance betwixt God and us, and so begin to return to him—the great difficulty is over ; we may easily proceed on our way ; but in that case Christ has died in vain, and, of consequence, our faith in him is a vain thing.

“ But is it not said that some believe only for a time ? ” Mat. xiii. 20, 21. True : and where shall we say their faith was defective, for that there was some fatal defect is manifest ? But surely it was not in the *manner* of their believing ; for there appears to have been *approbation* of their idea of the gospel—*delight* in it, and *dependence* upon it. And, in the appearance of things, they deserved to have been received, as those who had obtained *like precious faith* with the apostles. Yet, as before hinted, some where or other a mistake was made, which, like a canker worm, at length eat away their zealous profession. Where then did this latent evil lie ? Christ condescends to inform us ; and therein points out a real difference between true faith, and its most subtle counterfeits that can possibly exist. *He that receiveth the seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and UNDERSTANDETH it, which also beareth fruit and bringeth forth some an hundred fold, some sixty,*
some

some thirty. v. 2, 3. while the rest UNDERSTOOD it not, v. 19. On this account Jesus frequently inquires of his disciples, *Have ye understood these things?* After all the laboured definitions and nice distinctions, that have been given to distinguish a true faith from a false one, it appears from infallible truth, that the reason why any draw back to perdition, after many fair and flourishing appearances, is, because that under their profession they entertain some mistaken notions of the truth, and join somewhat of their own to it: so that though they may frequent the ordinances, talk in feeling strains about their experiences, and profess much regard to many of Christ's sayings; yet some pernicious falsehood, lying at the root of their profession, they endure but for a while. But we ought not to have suspicion of this being the case with any, while they continue in a true profession of Christ, or while they apparently abide in him, and bring forth fruit. The example seems to have been recorded in order to prevent any, when they see these draw back, from supposing that true faith might be lost, 1 John ii. 19. And to lead each professor to examine what kind of *faith* he holds, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. But when we perceive persons swerving from the form of sound words—courting the favour of the world to avoid the cross—declining in good works, and falling into enthusiastic fancies, or immoralities, we have sufficient ground to suspect, they have no root in themselves, and are withering away, 2 Peter ii. 1, 20, 21, 22, Heb. vi. 4.—6, chap. x. 26, 27, 38. There are various instances of persons making a clear professions of the truth as *words* can well express, who yet (as in the case with the Antinomians) do not understand that the Lord is a jealous God—that his holy law, so

far from being abolished by the gospel, is honoured and magnified by the Surety's obedience, and established as a rule of duty to them;* and it is to be feared that the principal reason, why some cavil at the law being a rule of conduct to believers is, because it forbids and condemns what their carnal appetites approve. The clearness of the profession—the uprightness of the conversation—obedience to Christ, and enduring therein unto the end—are the scripture criterions of true faith.

“Is it the *duty* of *all* who hear the gospel to believe it?” If the intention of this inquiry be, ought every hearer of the gospel to believe that he is elected—that Christ shed his blood for him in particular, or that he shall certainly go to heaven? we must reply in the negative; because these things are not true of all. So that if it were the duty of all to believe them, it would be their duty to believe the most palpable falsehoods. If the design of the question be to know whether the belief of the gospel is enjoined upon us, and recommended to us as the law is, viz. *That the man that doth those things shall live*; it must be answered, No: for if any exertions of body or mind are required to that end, Christ has died in vain. But if the enquiry be, whether it is the duty of every hearer of the gospel, to believe the record that God has given of his Son; that he is well pleased in him, and gives eternal life to as many as believe in his name—that he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and that there is redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace, for those who are inexcusably criminal? it

* See the Death of Legal Hope, the Life of Evangelical Obedience, by Mr. A. Booth, p. 130—160.

it is certainly every one's *duty*, who hears these things, to believe them, and that for the following reasons :

(1st) There is nothing in the gospel message, but what men are *capable* of believing and observing, *if they choose it*. As there is nothing which men more tenaciously retain, than a good opinion of their own disposition to do well, if they were disentangled from certain unfavourable circumstances, &c. so their deficiencies are generally attributed to the want of power or ability ; which ultimately throws the blame upon God, and makes him the author of sin. If the Lord required that of us which is *naturally* impossible to be performed, however willing we might be to the service, the case would be hard indeed with us ! But is this the case ? far be such a case from us : far be such a thing from the Judge of all the earth. The scripture plainly shows, that *naturally* man is as *able* as he is *willing*, to do the will of God. There is no *natural inability* in man to believe the gospel, otherwise it would not be criminal in him to reject it ; any more than it is sin in the deaf not to hear, or in the blind not to see, or in the lame not to walk. If a defect in the natural capacities were criminal, then the more ignorant part of mankind would be the greatest sinners ; and they who had an assemblage of brilliant parts, would be the highest saints. But then it is urged that the scripture represents man as utterly unable to understand, receive, or delight in, the gospel. As that *no man CAN come unto me*, John vi. 44. The world *CAN NOT* receive. John xiv. 17. chap. viii. 43. Rom. viii. 7. All this, and whatever else can be urged of the same nature is admitted. But then, most certainly, this *necessity* is nothing more than *DISINCLINATION*. There is no lack of natu-

ral abilities*; sinners can love, delight in, and practise sin; and if they would—if they had not a prevailing inclination to the contrary—a deep-rooted enmity to God, there is nothing that would hinder them from loving him, and obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But unbelief and disobedience suit their inclinations better; and men, as free agents, choose what is most agreeable to them. So that the unbelieving and disobedient are not *compelled*, by some extrinsic necessity, to follow their pernicious and destructive courses; but they do it by voluntary choice, as that which is most agreeable, and seems most convenient to them. Hence Jer. xlv. 16. *We will not* hearken unto thee. Psal. lxxxi. 11. *But my people would not* hearken to my voice. Job xxii. 17. Mat. xxiii. 37. John v. 40. To repent and believe, to love and obey, therefore, cannot be what men *would* do, but *cannot*; for the natural man, if he would speak out the language of his soul, its meaning would be this: “I have no inclination to love God and keep his commandments. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, suit my inclination better, and them I freely chuse, voluntarily indulge, and delight in.

2dly. If it be not the duty of every one who hears the gospel to believe it, unbelief cannot be their sin. But unbelief is deemed a sin, so enormous in its own nature, and so dishonouring to God in its consequences, that condemnation is passed upon it in the divine word, John iii. 18. 36. It must therefore be their duty to believe the gospel. If it be not the duty of all who hear

* Such expressions are liable to be misunderstood by those who know not the distinction of *natural* and *moral* abilities. The author, while he affirms that men are possessed of the former, admits that they are destitute of the latter.—Ed.

hear the truth preached, to believe and receive so glorious a revelation of God's love, then it can be no crime to break the first and great commandment. But nothing is more plain in scripture, than that every intelligent creature is under infinite obligations, to love the Lord with all his heart. To disbelieve and reject the gospel must therefore be an evil; and if it be an infinite evil to disobey and reject the truth, and have pleasure in unrighteousness, then of course we are under infinite obligations to believe. If we are not bound in duty to believe the gospel, are we under any obligation to believe *any part* of God's word? If we are, what part? if not, then we are under no obligation at all to observe any one thing that is commanded therein—Deism, of consequence, is no crime, and Christianity a mere farce!

3dly. To believe the gospel is the *commandment* of the everlasting God, 1 John iii. 23. Rom. xvi. 25. 26. John xii. 50. Mark i. 15. And if the command, exhortation, and invitation of God, do not bind the conscience, and enforce obedience, what does?

Since, therefore, it is nothing but man's *DIS-INCLINATION*, that prevents his believing; since unbelief is a sin deserving damnation; and since it is the commandment of the everlasting God, that men should repent and believe the gospel, it follows of course; that to believe the gospel must be the duty of every person who hears it. This then, I hope, being settled, I conclude this section with a few observations on the following question:—"What are we to understand by the assurance, and the full assurance of faith?" It has in general been taken for a confidence of personal interest in Christ; but this goes upon the supposition that faith is a persuasion that Christ loved me, and gave him-

self for me in particular ; which, as hath been shewn, is not the faith of the gospel. Numbers have arived at the full assurance of their election, &c. who yet have not obtained like precious faith with the apostles ; and whose assurance therefore is built upon a false foundation, and is nothing better than self-conceit and sad delusion. The faith of the operation of God is believing the record, testimony, witness, or evidence, that God has given of his Son, 1 John v. 9. 13. John iii. 33. Heb. xi. 1. The full assurance of faith, then, must be a more enlarged acquaintance with, and confidence in, *The truth as it is in Jesus*, Rom. iv. 19. 20. Luke i. 1. John vi. 69. Heb. x. 22. This is promoted by growing up into all riches of the full assurance of understanding, Col. ii. 2. And as faith grows in proportion to the increase of our knowledge of the truth, so also it becomes much confirmed, through the experimental enjoyment thereof : and as we grow up unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding in the truth, and enjoy pleasure in the blessed experience of it, so will our obedience prove, that our faith is not dead, and in this way we shall come to know our personal union with, and interest in, the Lord Jesus Christ. For when we can assert with the apostle Paul, *I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless, I live : yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God* (we may with great propriety add) *who loved me and gave himself for me.*

ESSAY III.

ON EXPERIENCE.

INTRODUCTION.

CHRISTIANITY is far from consisting in mere speculation: it has immediately to do with the understanding, will, conscience, affections, and conversation. So that no person can have any substantial proof that he is a believer, unless he enjoys, in some measure, the inward, powerful experience, of those truths that he professes to believe, as their genuine and necessary effects. Of all errors, therefore, in a profession of Christianity, *that* is the most dangerous in its consequences, which supposes a person may understand, believe, and trust in the gospel of Christ, and yet have no experience of the reality and efficacy of it. This surely is to have a form of godliness, while the power thereof is practically denied.

But the many abounding errors about the nature of gospel experience, and the use that should be made of it, warn us to proceed cautiously in our inquiries about it. "A vast deal of what, now-a-days, goes by the name of Christian experience, is very delusive, consisting of whims, flights, and raptures, engendered by the warmth of animal passions, without one spark of grace. Accordingly, we have often seen these vain-glorious boasters, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, bluster for a time, and then
vanish

vanish into emptiness." Yet vain and delusive as these imaginations are, it is but too manifest that many, who pass for orthodox Christians in our day, have no better a reason of their hope, than "Thus I have been affected, &c. and therefore I hope." Whence conclusions are drawn just as fancy dictates.

Here it will not be amiss, briefly to glance at the true cause of the various mistakes about religion in general, and experience in particular. We are taught in the word of God, that while man retained his original rectitude, he beheld his Maker's glory in the works of creation; and worshipped him with purity of affection, as far as God had made himself manifest in those visible objects. Moreover, man was framed to hear his Sovereign's voice, and obey it; and that he might know, that his happiness depended upon his hearing and obeying the word of God; that to obey was life, and to transgress, death; a test of his loyalty and dependence was given him, when he was placed in Paradise, Gen. ii. 16, 17. His understanding being clear, his will under subjection to the divine word, and his affections pure; his enjoyment, or experience of what he knew and believed, was a pure stream of felicity, flowing from the fountain of happiness itself. But *human nature* being corrupted by the poison of the serpent, that first apostate from holiness, being infused into it, man became vain, foolish, and disobedient. That *human nature* is corrupted, I take for granted, rather than set myself formally to prove: not for want of evidence to demonstrate the awful fact, but because it is too stubbornly supported by scripture and experience, to be denied with any tolerable shew of truth: and notwithstanding some may find themselves disposed to maintain *the dignity of human nature*, by substituting the flowers of rhetoric

rhetoric, or mere romance, in the place of evidence; the streams will indubitably prove the true qualities of the fountain, Mark vii. 20. 23.

Man's safety and happiness lay in his dependence on, and obedience to, the word of his Maker; and therefore, the seducer's grand aim was to draw him off from that, which we find he went about to do, by representing to him, that God withheld something from him, which if enjoyed would greatly add to his felicity; and to gild the fatal snare, perverted the divine word; which scheme but too well answered his design. Hereby he robbed man of the principle of truth, and so of the divine image, and of course of his safety and happiness. The false doctrines of Satan, *ye shall not surely die*, and *ye shall be as gods*, having entered into and corrupted the mind, the enemy thereby drew his own hateful image, consisting of pride, enmity, and deceit upon him. This is the sad source of all that irregularity, both in the powers of body and mind, that daily experience manifests, and of all that atheism, idolatry, and ungodliness, which so awfully prevail in the world. In consequence of this, it is become natural for man to sin with hope of impunity, and to seek happiness independent of God. If then we do but consider, what principles man is naturally under the dominion of, if we but reflect that his understanding is *darkness*, through the ignorance that is in him, the will *enmity*, and every affection disordered and defiled; and moreover, that man voluntarily gives up himself, to be led by the spirit of *error* and *self-dependence*, we shall see the true cause of the various branches of idolatry, and shall be able to account for all that self-flattery, self-exaltation, and self-confidence, which men are so prone to: nor shall we wonder, that the experience of many, under a profession

fession of religion, is legal, enthusiastic, or even diabolical. The corruption of human nature, and the lead which the spirit of error takes in directing the mind in religious concerns, are the two grand sources of all error and delusion. But it should also be observed, that Satan, in all ages, has had his agents among men, who have industriously propagated his doctrinal tares, and thereby, while they have sealed their own destruction, have promoted that of their fellow-creatures. Such our Lord stiles *blind guides*, and *leaders of the blind*, and warns his disciples to be aware of them, because their delusions would be so strong as to deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect. The apostles point them out (especially in the Epistles of Peter and Jude, and also in the Revelations) as the worst of enemies to mankind. We are informed that *many* would follow their pernicious way, in consequence of which, such different sorts of churches would be framed, from those which were gathered by the influence of the apostles' doctrine, that they would be governed by different rules, and united by different principles, from what the first churches were. Such agree to give their power to the *beast*, and support the kingdom of the *destroyer*: for, however shocking it might appear, there is scarce any thing in which people are so willing to deceive and be deceived, as in their eternal concerns! This the Lord by the prophet complains of, Jer. v. 30. 31. *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?* This observation to persons famous for a liberal way of thinking, may seem exceedingly uncharitable; but we have seen that he who can neither deceive nor
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be deceived, has declared that so it is. Nor was this *horrible thing* confined to Jeremiah's day: our Lord and his apostles, as above hinted, bid us expect such things, even under the strictest pretensions to Christianity, and to guard against *the cunning craftiness of men, who lie in wait to deceive*, and who PRIVILY would bring in damnable heresies, Eph. iv. 14. 2 Peter, ii. 1. But the Protestant reformed churches are ready to imagine that error, deception, &c. are confined to ROME, and some few *schismatics*; while Protestant dissenters maintain that error and delusion are inseparable from national churches, the very *constitution* of them being antiscriptural; and each party thinks every other sect is tainted with heterodoxy but themselves; when, alas! false joys, arising from false confidence, are but too manifestly among the various professions of our day; which should lead every man, in the first place, to suspect *himself*, and then to look with a jealous eye on all making pretensions to Christianity about him. Yet there have gone forth such abundant effusions of the spirit of *catholic charity*, that nothing is deemed more rude, than to intimate the least suspicion of our neighbour's creed being sound; and, therefore, nothing more generally censured than bigotry, party spirit, and a narrow way of thinking. But, strange to tell, though undeniably true the fact, this same *catholic charity* has it in her nature (happy for the friends of Jesus that it is not at present in her power) to persecute unto strange cities, and even unto death, those who dare refuse subscription to her dogmas! Though the above representations are nothing more than the scripture foretels, the writer of these Essays is far from thinking that every one who is in error, and rejoicing in a thing of nought, is intentionally striving to deceive.

deceive. Far be any such thought from him. No: It is to be lamented that many sincere persons are ignorantly led astray; and even some who are born of God, in their infantile state, may be in bondage to the rudiments of this world, *not knowing the depths of Satan*. There are also *degrees* in Christian experience, even as there are in knowledge and faith: for *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*. Though it should be carefully observed, that even the *new-born babe desires the sincere milk of the word*, that he may grow thereby; and so, the breathings of the heaven-born babe are *essentially* and *visibly* different from the swelling imaginations of the flesh, which are manifested in a certain kind of canting, whining, voluntary humility. In fine, the smallest degree of real gospel experience is, in its nature, foundation, and effects, not only distinct from, but directly opposite to, that which goes under the borrowed name of Christian-experience; but which, in fact, is nothing more than the fluctuation of the passions, generally set in motion by some enthusiastic rant, and is without foundation, either in scripture, sense, or reason—a mere castle in the air!

SECTION I.

WHEREIN SOME KINDS OF DELUSIVE EXPERIENCES, AND THE USE MADE OF THEM, ARE LAID OPEN AND EXPOSED.

THE pleasure and satisfaction persons take, in reflecting upon the advances they have made towards

towards the ports of bliss, according to their respective schemes of religion, and the influence this has upon their conduct, may be termed their *experience*. Not to enlarge upon the experience of the Pagan, the Mahometan, the Jew, or the Papist, who have all enjoyments suitable to the nature of their own creed, I shall briefly notice that kind of experience which is talked of amongst Protestants.

First: since the *nations* of the world have been denominated *Christian*, it has been no uncommon thing to find those who renounce the scripture as idle fiction, bearing the Christian name. Such, however, have a scheme of religion, and of consequence have *experience* suitable thereto. Their scheme may be briefly summed up thus: the notice of God and reason, which all men by the light of nature have, or at least may have, by the mere improvement of their abilities, *without revelation*, are sufficient to direct them in the way to eternal blessedness—satisfy them that such a state is attainable—and point out the way how it is to be attained; so that by a practical compliance with these *notions*, which man in his present state is capable of, he may certainly attain to acceptance with God, please him, and obtain eternal happiness. So much for the doctrine. Now for the corresponding experience, which may be had in the words of one of this class, who, in describing some Christians of his own stamp, says, “They hearken to the great IMMANUEL within, the word and voice of everlasting reason, and are as blessed and happy as creatures can be, by the redeeming power of the HOLY JESUS.” It is most certain that by the phrases “Immanuel, and the holy Jesus,” the “word and voice of everlasting reason” is intended. It is plain, also, that there is no other reason for using these

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scripture phrases, than to throw a dash of popularity into their system, in order to make it more agreeable to those who may yet find some scruples of conscience which make them unwilling entirely to give up revelation. Now though it is true, that by the notices of God in his works, Rom. i. 20. and the reasonableness of doing to others, as we think it right they should do unto us, Rom. ii. 14, 15. we are taught our duty to God and our neighbour; and though this knowledge is sufficient for every man to find himself guilty by, and so to stand in need of some other revelation of God, to give peace to his conscience, and make him happy for ever; yet nothing but some pernicious falsehood can teach the guilty to hope for eternal happiness, separate from that which takes away sin, and gives a title to everlasting life. But if any thing else can, there is no cause why "the word and voice of everlasting reason" should not make us happy as creatures can be. However, it needs but little discernment in the scriptures to understand, that the sense connected with these phrases, in the experience before us, is foreign to the sense of them there; and that the experience itself is nothing better than a mere phantasm.

Again: we have already considered the doctrine of those who seek their Maker's favour, *as it were by the deeds of the law*, and have pointed out the falsity and delusion thereof, Essay I. Sect. IV. The experience arising from it, is that dignity and self-enjoyment, which a consciousness of their sincere obedience, and the progress they make in that antient doctrine, *ye shall be as gods*, yields them. But things always are as their foundations be. The ground of the doctrine being falsehood and deceit, the experience must be nothing better than a miserable

able delusion, and the pleasure supported in the soul by it, equally criminal with the indulgence of any fleshly lust, and much more dangerous.

Further : there are other professing Christians, whose doctrine and experiences are of a more *spiritual* nature than the former, who are much more concerned about cultivating *the devout exercises of the heart*, than performing the *externals* of religion. The doctrine of this class of professors, is not a very material circumstance even among themselves ; for they can readily agree to differ about *that*, provided they are of one mind in what are reckoned *essentials*. Indeed, the *most spiritual* of this class find no occasion for any external revelation ; but this notion is now become more out of repute than it was a century ago. However, they generally agree in this, that the word of God is a *dead letter*—that its doctrines are *dry*—and that to insist much upon them, leads, at least, to *speculative Antinomianism*. In, short, the doctrines of the word being looked upon as mere *shells*, their language is “ away with doctrines, and give us a spiritual frame, a warm heart, and comfortable feelings ; you are for a Christ without, we are for a Christ within ; you are for doctrine, we are for experience.” Now if this warm heart, spiritual frame, and so on, is promoted, whether it be by *bodily sensations*, a *dream*, some *impressions on the imagination*, or by the force and energy of what is called a *powerful preacher* ; they account that they are alive to God, and are eminently influenced by his Spirit. They have somehow got a notion, that something spiritual enters into the nature of Christianity, but being in a natural estate, they understand not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii 14. Alas for them ! their wretched fits of affection begin in *self*, tend to exalt *self*, and end in *self-soothing*, if not in *self-adoration*. The

foundation of all such experience is gross ignorance, supported by the mere agitation of corrupted nature, or the strong delusions of the devil ; and to attribute these things to the work of the Spirit of God, is in fact to take the name of the Lord in vain. But I shall produce a specimen of these kinds of experience.

As to those which arise from bodily sensations, a certain author has thus expressed himself, "There are some instances of persons, in whom it seems manifest, that the first ground of their affection is some bodily sensation. The animal spirits, by some cause (and probably sometimes by the devil) are suddenly and unaccountably put into a very agreeable motion, causing persons to feel pleasantly in their bodies ; the animal spirits are put into such a motion as is wont to be connected with the exhilaration of the mind ; and the soul, by the laws of the union of soul and body, hence feels pleasure. The motion of the animal spirits does not first arise from any affection or apprehension of the mind whatsoever, but the very first thing that is felt, is an exhilaration of the animal spirits, and a pleasing external sensation, it may be in their breasts.

Hence, through ignorance, the person being surprized, begins to think, surely this is the Holy Ghost coming into him. And then the mind begins to be affected and raised ; there is first great joy, and then many other affections, in a very tumultuous manner, putting all nature, both body and mind, into a mighty ruffle." Instances of this sort of experiences might be seen in abundance amongst the *Jumpers* in Wales, or in certain select experiences and journals, which have been published to the world. Query : Are not these kinds of experiences much promoted by the new mode of conducting the psalmody in certain places of worship ? And, if so, might
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we not obtain as *rich experience* in a play-house, or at a concert?

Again : the chief and most satisfactory experience of some arise from *dreams*, and I have known this kind of, to use their own phrase, “precious experience,” received with great applause, when the *dreamer* has requested church-fellowship, which, by the way, is a proof that the bond of union amongst such societies, is a *mutual good opinion* of each others experience, and not the faith which was once delivered to the saints. It is hardly to be told what *terrible* and what *pleasing* experiences come from this quarter. Some hereby have been driven to their wits end : while others have been soaring almost into the habitations of the blessed : and have been ready to imagine themselves enthroned in bliss above ; when, to their sad mortification, they awoke and behold it was a dream ! Eccl. v. 7. Isaiah, xxix. 8. . However, the extasies and raptures which it occasioned, frequently gave strength for many days afterwards.

Further : these “warm hearts,” and “comfortable feelings,” frequently arise from impressions upon the imagination. Here I shall again lay before the reader the words of the author above referred to, who expresses himself accurately on this head. “The imagination is that power of the mind, whereby it can have a conception or idea of things of an external or outward nature, when those things are not present, and are not perceived by the senses. It is called imagination from the word *image* ; because thereby a person can have an image of some external thing in his mind, when that thing is not present in reality, nor any thing like it.—When such ideas are strongly impressed upon the mind, and the image of them in the mind is very lively, almost as if one saw them, or

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heard

heard them, &c. that is called an *impression upon the imagination*. Many, who have had such things, have very ignorantly supposed them to be of the nature of spiritual discoveries. Some have had impressed upon them ideas of a great outward light, which they call a sight of God's glory. Some have had imaginary ideas of Christ hanging on the cross, with his hands and feet extended, and the blood streaming from his pierced side; which they term a spiritual discovery of Christ crucified, and of the way of salvation through his blood. Some have had lively ideas of heaven, and of Christ sitting at the right hand of God, with the shining ranks of angels and arch-angels bowing before him, which they think is like what Stephen enjoyed, when he saw heaven opened, &c. Some have had, time after time, lively ideas of a person of a beautiful countenance (somewhat like the representation of cherubs at the altar in churches) smiling upon them, which they account a spiritual discovery of a reconciled God, and a manifestation of the love of Jesus to their soul. To such it is a sufficient evidence that these things are *spiritual discoveries*, and that they see them *spiritually*, that they do not see them with the external organs of sight, but in their hearts. For they can see them when their eyes are shut. In like manner the imagination of some has been impressed with ideas of the sense of hearing. They have had ideas of words, as if they were spoken to them; sometimes they are the words of scripture, and sometimes other words. These they term having the inward call of Christ—hearing his voice in their hearts*, having the inward witness

* Some such notion as this must be maintained, to countenance the silly distinction between believing in the *head*, and believing in the *heart*.

witness of his spirit—and the inward testimony of the love of Christ,” and so on. From these impressions, these imaginary ideas, they conclude, as indeed they are taught by their leaders so to do, that the good work is begun in them—that they are the dear people of God’s love, and that these experiences are the foretastes of heaven! and the heat of their passions so intoxicates their soul, that one may as soon expect to gain the attention of a company of drunkards to a lecture upon sobriety, as to have theirs, while we expostulate with them about their delusions. It might be truly said, they feed on ashes; and a deceived heart has turned them aside; and, what is truly lamentable, these unhappy souls, instead of watching against these enthusiasms, lay themselves open to them; yea, they even pray for them, and when, after their absence, they have been renewed, it is taken for granted that God has heard their prayer; and this affects them more, and confirms them the stronger in their delusions. Now that these things are spiritual discoveries, of some kind, is readily admitted; but that they are the teachings of the Spirit of God, divine illuminations, or in any sense whatsoever proceeding from God, must be denied, so long as we retain the least veneration for him. All divine illumination conveys *instruction*. The spirit of truth testifies of Jesus, and in all his operations makes use of the written word, by which he opens the understanding. But the hope and experiences of the persons above referred to, would not in the least be injured, if infidels could prove the scriptures to be a cunningly devised fable. If then, these enthusiastic reveries must be called spiritual discoveries, they may fitly be denominated by the scripture phrase, *spiritual wickedness in high places*.

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Once more: under this sort of experience may be ranked those extasies of the mind, that are engendered by the solemn *tone*, earnest zeal, and blustering vociferation, of those who are, by these persons, called experimental preachers. The principal attention of these leaders is to produce what is most likely to influence the passions, work upon the imagination, and wind up the affections into lively frames, raptures, and extasies; which, in order to make some shew of gospel, they have the daring profaneness to call by the most sacred names. Hence we have been told, in writings almost universally admired, that “Whoever, upon an impartial examination, can find certain marks upon them, viz. a spirit of prayer—not committing sin—conquest over the world—loving one another, and loving our enemies*—may be as certain as though an angel from heaven was to tell them their pardon is sealed in heaven.—These are infallible marks; these are IMMANUEL, God in and with us; these make up the *white stone*; these are the *earnest* of the heavenly inheritance: in short, these are glory begun, and are that *good thing*, that *better part*, which neither men nor devils shall ever be able to take from us.” Now there is no reason why a *free-thinker* may not as well use the terms *Immanuel*, and the *holy Jesus*, when he applies them to the “Word and voice of everlasting reason,” as those who profess to be shocked at the thought of Deism prevailing, when they apply them to the imagination of the thoughts of their heart, under the influence of bodily sensations, dreams, impressions upon the imagination, or the influences of the passions under the
powerful

* These things, if real, are solid marks of a Christian: but the author is here speaking of counterfeit, delusive experiences.—Ed.

powerful vociferation of a modern declaimer. Nor would the *nature* of these experiences be in the least injured, if the name should be changed from “Immanuel God in and with us” to the term *spirit*, or the *light within*, which is the great arcanum of the Quakers. Or were they to agree with the antient Pythagoreans among the heathen, to call these inward movements “A divine afflatus.” But to renounce scripture *name* and *thing* would never preserve the credit of these pretenders to Christianity — The ebbings and flowings of these things are called Christian-experience: their *absence* is termed desertion, or the hiding of God’s face; and their *presence* communion with God. Nothing can be more applicable to this class of professors, than the word of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah, lxvi. 3. 4. chap. l. 10. *Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.—Therefore, behold all ye that kindle fire, , that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This ye shall have of mine hands, YE SHALL LIE DOWN IN SORROW.*

Again: there are others, who in their studied confessions of faith, profess to depend for life and salvation upon Jesus Christ, and to be governed in their faith and practices by his word alone: among whom, nevertheless, there is much *chaff*; which, if it were winnowed away, would be no great loss. The experience of such might be considered as arising, either from some parts of scripture coming *suddenly* to their mind, from the appearance of the supposed principle
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of grace, or from what is generally called the assurance of faith. Without being solicitous about order, or the choice of words, some general attention may be given to these things as they appear in the professing world.

It is acknowledged that all genuine experience does proceed from the word of God : and those experiences which are agreeable to the gospel cannot but be true. But the error here intended to be pointed out, is that readiness discovered in professors, if they are in any way affected by a passage of scripture, to conclude that it must come from God ; it must be true gospel-experience, and therefore cannot deceive them. Such, in relating what they call "The Lord's gracious dealings with them," will say, "There were such and such sweet promises brought to my mind : they came suddenly as if they were spoken to me : I had no hand in bringing such texts to my mind. I was not even thinking of any thing leading to them ; they came all at once, so that I was surprised. I had not thought of them a long time before ; I did not know at first that they were scripture ; but they came with such power, that I was overwhelmed with joy, the tears flowed in great abundance, and I was filled with joy and peace in believing " Here let it be observed, that if any scripture comes to the mind, whether suddenly or more gradually, as the effect of the Spirit's work, and gives instruction and support, the effects are, without doubt, genuine gospel-experience. But what is here objected to shall be instanced in a few particulars.

If a person (whose hope is placed in his awakenings, his convictions, or his experiences, be they of what kind soever they may) should be in great distress from the fearful apprehension that his hope is vain, and that he is still in
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his sins; and his distress heightened by the near prospect of death's approach, should on a sudden have, Hab. ii. 3. darted into his mind, "*The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*"—If from hence he should, by the vision, understand the return of his former experience or joys—that the time for his comforts in this way is fixed, and so it becomes him to wait without them till they come, under the persuasion that they will shortly be here: And if, following this, Isaiah liv. 7. 8 should be suggested and applied to the same purpose—"*For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, &c.*"—from which hope is revived, fear prevented, and comfort, in some measure, restored, in the thought that he shall *some time* be comforted again. It is very plain the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with any part of this; and it is as plain, that the hope founded upon it, and the comfort taken from it, are vain and delusive; for the *sense* in which the passages are understood, is contrary to the true meaning of the Spirit of truth in those places. It is making a new meaning to the text; a meaning too which God never designed, and is in fact the same as making a new BIBLE; which is not the work of the Spirit of God. Besides, there is no comfort that comes from God to guilty sinners, but what comes through Christ, his righteousness, and his atonement. But to take comfort under a sense of having done wrong, from a persuasion that we are different from others, and from what we once were, is not the hope set before us in the gospel. To suppose, therefore, that God
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would comfort any by such means, is to suppose that he delights in sinners out of his Son, and that he can comfort them in believing a lie: than which a greater absurdity cannot be invented.

Again: if a person prays earnestly to the Lord to direct him in the way of Providence, when, we will suppose, there are two or more ways before him, (though perhaps before he has an inclination to one way) while he is musing and in great perplexity, that passage comes suddenly into his mind, attended with the circumstances mentioned in the other case, *This is the way, walk ye in it*; that is, the way he has most impressed upon his mind. He takes this for a notable answer to his prayer; and meeting with what his heart went after, he becomes confirmed in the persuasion, and has it strengthened by, Gen. xxviii. 15. following it, *Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*; and many others of the like import. Hence he concludes, that he has much interest with God; that he is beloved of the Lord, and that his ways are directed by him. Though there is no proof in all this that God has any hand whatever in the whole affair. But what is very remarkable, when a text of scripture comes to the mind which tends to distress, as for instance, when a doubting soul has darted into his mind the words of David, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul,” it is said to be the temptation of the Devil. But what reason can be assigned for this? Has Satan power only over *uncomfortable* passages of scripture; or cannot he pervert *any part* of them, to tempt and deceive men with? and if so, then its being a comfortable or a precious promise, is no proof that Satan has
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not a hand in it. Yea, it appears to be his work *alone* when it tends to confirm the false joy, and false confidence of sinners.

The experience of others arises from, and is maintained by, some imaginary symptoms of a work of grace in their souls; such are going about in quest of some token for good in themselves, and when they hear the word, are searching in every corner of their heart, to see if something favourable does not appear there, and that generally with a strong bias in the mind, to make the most of what they find; that much the same use has been made of these signs, as the ancient Pharisees made of the law. Hence some signs and marks are given for professors to judge of their state by, that are common to believers and hypocrites; and others, that have no foundation at all in the word of God; from which, when they are perceived, or imagined to be in them, they conclude well of themselves. But when the more thinking part of them come to reflect, they perceive, that many have had those things and yet fallen away, which tend to create sad suspense; and though nothing but the blood of Christ, flowing freely to the chief of sinners, can effectually remove the torment of the mind, yet their leaders, either from ignorance of, or disaffection to, this sovereign remedy, set themselves to distinguish where there is no difference, and to create reverence for their own judgment, divide and subdivide very nicely, betwixt what are genuine convictions, desires, affections, and so on; and what are counterfeit; whereby the mind is frequently more entangled, and heavier burdens laid upon it. And after all the labour and pains, it is generally found a difficult piece of work, to persuade some to think well of themselves; the most that they can be brought to is, that, *they desire to*
P *believe;*

believe; and when nothing else will do, they get some sort of ease by hearing, that *the desire of faith is faith*. This reminds me of what I once heard an old woman say to one of these “doubting believers,” with whom she had taken much pains to make her think well of herself; but her patience at length being worn out, she exclaimed, “You are the most uncomfortable people in the world to talk to. There’s no end in it, for no sooner has one removed one doubt, but you bring up twenty more.”—The opportunities wherein comfort and joy are obtained from this source, are called “Bethel-visits;” and if the persons are what is called orthodox in their creed, although they should not think much about a godly conversation, or of observing all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, but on the contrary, through frequent returns of these fits of affection, should grow tired of religion; yet believing the final perseverance of the saints, they know, that if once in grace then always in grace, and can address their souls in words often used upon this occasion:

“Did Jesus once upon thee shine?”

“Then Jesus is for ever thine.”

In like manner they are asked, “Do you recollect, in any part of your life, either in reading, hearing, praying, or conversing, when you enjoyed the presence of God?” (of which they are to form their own conceptions) “if so, then my soul for your’s all is safe,” or in words to this effect. Hence they conclude, that as by divine assistance they have exerted an act of faith, (that is, persuaded themselves that they are not as other men) and have enjoyed the divine presence—all is secure and well. It only happens to be “winter with the soul,” and if the person dies in this wintry season, it is hoped
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all is well, because we have been told God puts many of his children *to bed in the dark!* If any doctrine deserves to be denominated *Antinomian*, surely this does; for what can be more dangerous, or what have a greater tendency to lull professors to sleep, in the bed of carnal security, and encourage them to sin, with the hope of impunity? Once more: there are others whose experiences arise from what is called by them the “assurance of faith,” or, in other words, the appropriating the benefits of the gospel, Christ, heaven, and so on, to *myself*; and if we closely attend to the experience arising from this doctrine, we shall find, that it does not come so much from the things believed, as from the consciousness that they are ours. We shall hear persons of this sentiment cry down *works* and *legal doctrines*, and set up what they call *faith* in opposition to them, and they will speak many excellent things about grace and the gospel; but then we are somehow led to imagine, that these things, declared in common to the world, are little or nothing without the appropriating act. This act is sometimes made upon internal qualifications; but others cut the matter much shorter, and appropriate, without any evidence, either from scripture, sense, or reason, or in other words they vainly imagine, though firmly persuade themselves, that it is so, because they believe it to be so. They confess that it is not a truth before it is believed, but becomes a certain truth when they believe it, and never would be true, had not they assured themselves it was so. This persuasion begets joy and great peace, yea, even leads them (to use one of their own expressions) to “bask before the throne.” Such will talk of lying very humbly before the Lord, and will make high pretences to humility; but not knowing

wherein true humility consists, they very awkwardly ape it. In giving an account of their rich experiences, wonderful discoveries, and so on, they tell us “at such a season I was humbled in the very dust—was entirely emptied of self—saw my heart as black as hell, and as deceitful as the devil, and was as low as I well could be in self-abasement.” And this will be attended with great outward shew of humiliation; perhaps, in the meanness or peculiarity of their dress—the affected manner of their speech—some strange gestures—solemn looks, &c.; so that if one had taken their word for it, they are the most humble creatures under heaven. Yet if their general conduct is but closely looked into, we shall see them to be the most haughty, assuming, and audaciously proud, of any among the sons of men. The writer has had occasion to see the best-affected humility spoiled, by an honest friend to truth charging the pretender thereto, with the very thing he had confessed himself the subject of. The person, whom we will call *Humilis*, having, in one of his prayers, confessed before the Lord, the hypocrisy of his heart, that he was less than the least of all saints, and not worthy to be named among the children of God: his friend having observed some things about him, which laid but too just a foundation for such a confession, took the liberty of expostulating with him. But *Humilis* having forgot what manner of person he had confessed himself to be, was very much chagrined at the charge; his temper warmed, and at length arose to the heights of resentment; in short, if the whole were told, it would appear, that *Humilis* had a very deceitful sense of the deceitfulness of his heart. From hence it is plain, as well as from various other circumstances, that the chief end in this voluntary humility, is to be thought
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very humble Christians, and persons of great diffidence, by all who hear them, that in their estimation they may be set foremost on the lists of saints. The account God makes of this parade, may be seen, Isaiah lxxv. 5. The whole of it is founded in ignorance; for did such know what *cause* there is in them, for self-abasement before God; *that* would appear so great, that astonishment would seize them, that such wretches as they are, so filthy and abominable, are not more deeply abased before him whose name is HOLY. If we did but entertain just sentiments of ourselves, we should wonder why the Lord should condescend to call our lowest abasement *humility*, when even then we are infinitely short of being so low as we ought to be. A person truly humbled before God, would think it a much greater instance of pride in him to boast of his humility, than for a slave who has washed his master's feet, to triumph in the great stoop he had made. But the fact is, those who delight to talk of their humility, have an intolerably high conceit of their own importance; which makes them think, that the least condescension below what they imagine themselves to be, is great humility! We also hear much of their hearts being filled with the love of God, and how great their love to God is. But their love flows from a vain, blind conceit, that God loves them in particular; it is not the true character of God, either in the law, or in the gospel, that draws their attention. Besides, did they know the infinite loveliness of God, and the boundless lengths, breadths, and depths of his love to sinners, they would be led, in their highest flame of love to God, to confess, that in comparison with what it ought to be, it is very flat and languid. But if *their own interest* in the great things of God be called in question;

if they are charged with sin, because of the sad and shameful defects in their love, and are told, that nothing can relieve them, under a sense of their deficiencies, notwithstanding all their former experiences, but that which saved the *Thief* upon the cross; if they are warned to fear, lest a promise being made of entering into rest, any of them should seem to come short of it, and are addressed with those words, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall:"—We shall be charged with razing foundations—making the hearts of God's people sad—discouraging them in their pilgrimage, and laying stumbling blocks in the way; and, in the temper that influenced our Lord's hearers in the synagogue at Nazareth, we shall hear them saying, "What, have I, who have been a professor of Christ so many years, and have been indulged with communion with God—I, who have basked before the throne, and have been indulged with so many Bethel-visits from the Lord—I am I at last reduced to the same situation, as to the ground of my hope and comfort, as a sinner in his first coming to Christ? How shocking the thought! How alarming the consideration! If I could admit this to be true, I must give up all, and despair!"—Thus some have shewn their enmity to the gospel hope, and plainly declared, that their experience comes from the soothing thought that Christ and heaven are *theirs*; though it is certain that Christ proposes nothing, but his grace manifested in his death and resurrection, for the relief of any of his people, under a consciousness of their deficiencies and daily back-slidings: Witness, 2 Cor. xii. 8. Rev. i. 17. From the whole, though one would be ready to think, from hearing the doctrinal creed of these persons, that they have some regard for the disallowed gospel, yet when we trace them

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to their experiences, and mark the use they make of them, it but too visibly appears where their hope in reality is grounded.

From the specimens that have been produced of the best approved experiences, though each party is ready to censure the other, either for legality or presumption, and so would seem widely to differ from them; every one taught of God will easily discern, that in fact they all agree in *one central point*: and that is, to make up some kind of foundation for the guilty to build their hope upon, aside from the perfect atonement, and everlasting righteousness, of the Son of God. And though some will speak of Christ's work in high strains, and would at first view appear to make it all in all; yet it is plain, that without taking into consideration something either acquired by them, or wrought in them, along with his work, they do not find rest to their souls; and therefore the more clear the profession, the greater the deception and the more liable to entangle unwary souls. Because this kind of *self-dependence* is varnished over with evangelical phrases, and so lies deep and unsuspected. Whether then our preservative against despair, or the source of our experience, be called—everlasting reason—a life of piety, virtue, and devotion—some pleasing feelings of the mind, arising either from bodily sensations, dreams, impressions upon the imagination, or the zeal of a blustering preacher—the evidence of a supported work of grace begun, or a powerful persuasion of the goodness of our state, it is foreign to the hope set before the guilty in the gospel, and far distant from the source of all true Christian experience. In them, therefore, who are thus carried away, are the words of the prophet verified, Is. ix. 16. *The leaders of this people cause them to err; and they*

they that are led of them are destroyed. It would be the greatest happiness that could befall such, to be fairly convinced of the delusion, and be persuaded of the sufficiency of the truth in Christ to give them peace and joy in believing. But alas! their bands are generally strong, and the least that is to be expected, for making the friendly attempt (unless the arm of the Lord be revealed) is a sneer, an outcry of uncharitableness, a complaint of a bad spirit, or a charge of being an enemy to Christian experience.

SECTION II.

WHEREIN THE NATURE OF TRUE CHRISTIAN
EXPERIENCE IS CONSIDERED.

It is very common for persons carried away with the workings of corrupted nature, and the delusions of Satan, to charge those who, out of love to their souls, expostulate with them, and expose their error to them, with denying all Christian experience. But is it not very unfair to conclude, that because we don't hold a point to be true, in *every sense* in which persons have set it forth, therefore we do not believe it in *any sense*?—Every Christian has experience of the following nature, viz. That which ariseth from the flesh, the corruption of nature, and the various trials with which his heavenly Father sees meet to prove him; and from the inward proof, or trial that his soul has, of the gospel of peace and salvation, or from finding that to be true, by actual enjoyment, which he believes upon the
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the unerring testimony of God. Of these we shall speak more particularly.

First: Man is naturally of the earth, earthy. His constitution was framed to dwell on the earth, and to hold communion with God in the things that are made, through the medium of his obedience; so that it was no crime for Adam to set his affections on things which are upon the earth, or to be of a legal spirit. We may justly say, therefore, that it is *natural* for man to cleave to the earth, and also to have a strong propensity to seek the favor of God by his own works. This state is commonly termed nature, or the natural man, and at other times the flesh. Rom. iv. 1. Gal. iii. 3. 1. Cor. ii. 14. But James iii. 15. not only represents man as *earthly*, but also *sensual*, and *devilish*; and Paul, referring to the same thing, says, *The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*, Rom. viii. 7. 8. Such is the dreadful malignity of the flesh as corrupted by sin, and such the contrariety of it to the divine nature, that it is impossible it ever should be made like to God, or even in the least degree conformed to him, being in its very essence absolute ENMITY against him.—This corrupt principle is properly inherent, being interwoven with the very texture of our constitution. Or rather we are said to be *in the flesh*, that is, covered in and overwhelmed with its impurity; so that naturally our thoughts, words, and actions, are under the dominion and powerful influence thereof.—When a soul is born of God, we are not to imagine that the *old man* is better natured than he was before; or that there is a change *in our corrupt nature* for the better. For we have the authority of the Holy Ghost to say, and the experience of Paul to evince, that *in the flesh* dwells no good thing,

it is neither converted nor totally destroyed. There is indeed a *new* principle, a vital, spiritual, and divine source of life implanted, which liveth and abideth for ever; even the word which by the gospel is preached, and which is called *spirit*. But this is not nature renewed, but a principle as opposite to nature, as light is to darkness. Hence we read that the *flesh* lusteth against the *spirit*, and the *spirit* against the *flesh*, and these are CONTRARY the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would, Gal. v. 17. Corrupt nature, or sin that dwelleth in us, is so full of enmity to God, so deceitful, so desperately wicked, that it is *past all cure*. We might as well attempt to wash the Ethiopian white, or to change the Leopard's spots, as to make the carnal mind any better disposed towards God and his law; even the great Physician himself has marked it incurable, and died that it might be *destroyed*, Rom. vi. 6. It must, therefore, in whatever measure it remains in the soul, retain its corrupt principles and properties.—Now the opposite principles of *flesh* and *spirit*, or *nature* and *grace*, dwelling in the same soul, they cannot fail to oppose each other. Each strives for the victory, and aims at the total extirpation of the other, so that war is continually maintained, James iv. 1. 1. Peter ii. 11. Every believer, then, has painful experience of this law in his members, warning against the law of his mind, which has made the Saints in all ages groan, being burthened. Hence we find some of them making use of such expressive language as the following,—*Behold I am vile—I abhor myself—I am undone—I am as a beast before thee—I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man—In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing*. Those who have been made partakers of *grace*, cannot be reconciled

ciled to the *flesh*; they long and pray for its destruction, in all its properties. The different and opposite actings of flesh and spirit may briefly be described as follows: We have seen, that man was framed to live by virtue of his *own* righteousness; hence self-righteousness is a chief property of nature, and all who are born again, find in themselves a strong bias to reject the righteousness of Christ, and establish their own; and that in various forms, and under various pretences; and none but believers in Christ are aware of the evil of this propensity—this is the root of unbelief—this cleaves close to, and easily besets, every child of Adam; but as the believer only is conscious of it, the more he increases in the knowledge of Jesus, the more perceptible will these self-righteous propensities be to him. So that, though once he was very unwilling to think himself indisposed to the gospel, he now finds a constant necessity of suspecting himself of this evil. But the true grace of God in the heart leads the sinner to live by the righteousness of Christ:—its genuine language is, *And be found in him not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, and, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* Here then is the chief point where watchfulness in the believer is requisite, lest the ever-restless principle of self-righteousness should prevail. The *flesh* tends to the earth, being earthy—the *spirit* is for having the affection set on things above, and for looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. The *flesh* is for gratifying the corrupt inclinations, which are sensual and devilish;—the *spirit* is for mortifying the deeds of the body, and denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts. Nature shudders at

at the thought of death, and, indeed, were it to act otherwise, it would deny itself—the *spiritual* desire is, *To depart and be with Christ. which is far better.* Thus we see, that every believer has a carnal, fleshly principle dwelling in him, but not reigning; abiding, but not ruling; in some measure cast down, but not entirely destroyed. He has also a spiritual and divine principle, an immortal seed that is springing up unto everlasting life. When nature is dissolved, the corrupt principle will be destroyed, and in the resurrection, the Saints shall have their bodies fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, and their renewed spirits shall inhabit this incorruptible frame; and by virtue of that righteousness, which is upon all who believe, enjoy eternal life.

Again: the believer has much experience, arising from the various trials which his heavenly Father sees meet to bring upon him; or which he, through his own weakness or imprudence, may bring upon himself. The trials of his faith may be of various kinds; sometimes prosperity, and at other times adversity; which have their different effects upon his mind; all of which tend to convince him, of standing in constant need of being upheld by the Lord, and in the end prove rich benefits to his soul, Heb. xii. 10. James i. 2. 4. 1 Peter i. 7. He finds, under these various trials, that *Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope.* For while under the painful feelings of the body of sin and death, the temptations of Satan, who is continually attacking him, and the trials of life, he experiences divine grace sufficient for him; so that while in the world he has tribulation, in Jesus he has peace. He has thereby that hope, which is built *alone* on the riches of divine grace, *confirmed*; and thereby knows in whom
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he has believed, and becomes persuaded (not only from the certainty that ariseth from the divine declaration, but from his own joyful experience) that he is able to keep that which he has committed to him until that day; having found already that the love and power of Christ were sufficient to support him when, *Without were fightings—within were fears.*

Secondly: we have now to speak more largely of the inward proof and trial that believers have of gospel truths. Such is the nature of every gospel truth, that no sooner is it received in the light of the Holy Spirit, than it produces in the mind every answerable affection; and as the happy soul advances in the knowledge of the truth, he finds himself, as it were, in an infinite circle. The transcendent beauty, glory, and suitableness of divine truth, engage his attention: with steady purpose of heart he pursues it, and receives the blessings contained in it; whereby his soul is fed, nourished, and strengthened, though far from being *cloyed*; but finding his life in the enjoyment thereof, presses after more enlarged views and experience of the blessed realities, even until he arrives at all riches of the full assurance of understanding, which, in the very nature of the thing, must lead him an eternal round of knowing, and desiring to know—of enjoying and longing to enjoy: still rising higher and higher—still learning more of the excellent knowledge of Christ; of his unparalleled, exquisite, and satisfying sweetness, which only makes the soul hunger and thirst for more! for the truth of Christ can never, never cloy.

Here it might be observed, that what distinguishes true gospel-experience from its various counterfeits, is, *The truth as it is in Jesus*: this is what the soul feels the force of and not any

manner in which the mind is exercised, in looking to, or receiving the truth, but the truth *itself*, even all the excellent things contained in the gospel, viz. the glorious character of God, his great love in giving his dear, his only, his well-beloved Son, to die the just for the unjust—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross—and the glory, sufficiency, and freeness of the gospel to heal, pardon, and save the guilty. So that when a Christian speaks of his experience, he will not furnish us with a long detail of what he has been assisted to do, what success and disappointments he has met with (in attempting to establish his own righteousness) what doubts and fears he has had about the goodness of his state, and his “secret hope at bottom” from his former experience, and so on; but having his heart directed into the love of God, out of the fulness thereof, he will speak of the sovereign favour of God—the beauties of the Redeemer’s person, and the glory, excellency, and perfection of his finished work. With these pleasing realities his soul is so taken up, that he has no time to bestow any compliments upon himself, or his own attainments: a sense of the former charms, chains, and captivates his soul; an acquaintance with the latter lays him in the dust—shews him what a poor, wretched, helpless sinner he is still—how deceitful his heart is—how prone to let slip the gospel-hope, and that he has need of many humbling, and affecting lessons, to subdue his pride. Hence he learns the necessity of distrusting himself, of keeping a watchful eye over his own heart, and of holding fast the beginning of his confidence stedfast unto the end. Having given some general hints about the nature of gospel-experience, we shall now attend

a little more particularly to the subject. But it will not be amiss to collect from the foregoing essays, a summary of the gospel, which we have seen is the genuine source of all true experience. The Angel, in proclaiming the Saviour's advent, addressed the shepherds thus, *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a SAVIOUR, who is Christ the Lord.* Which manifestation brings *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.* The primary glory of the gospel consists in the divine perfections of wisdom, holiness, justice, love, mercy, truth, and faithfulness, being therein glorified in the highest. But in this bright mirror of DEITY, there is also represented the most shocking scene of human misery that can possibly be set forth, while yet, the good pleasure of God is manifested to men, in the all-sufficient relief that is provided there for sinners of all nations. These things published, contain good tidings of great joy to ALL PEOPLE, whether they entertain them as such or no; for our reception or rejection of a truth cannot possibly alter its nature. The glad tidings of the gospel point immediately to every one who hears them. Unto *you* is the word of this salvation sent; and through this man is preached unto *you* the forgiveness of sins, is its benign language to every one who hears it. Whoever then is taught of God, to understand the gospel, will not conceive of it merely as an account of what God intends to do for some unknown persons; but he sees a wide door opened to sinners of every nation and degree, without distinction. No person, therefore, who doubts of the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ, to give *him* immediate relief under the deepest sense of guilt, believes, that very

forgiveness that is with God. No person questioning its unlimited freeness, or whether it is addressed to sinners *as such*, believes the same gospel that Jesus and his Apostles preached. No one believing that the blessings of the gospel belong to him, because he is properly principled or qualified, in preference to those who are ungodly and without strength, understands and knows that gospel that is good tidings of great joy to *all people*. It is not denied that either of these persons, heartily, sincerely, affectionately, and steadily believe the gospel *in some sense*, as did Simon Magus, the stony ground hearers and others. But to receive the gospel in any other sense than that which the Holy Spirit teacheth, is the most fundamental and pernicious error that any can fall into. However, all who have heard and learned of the Father, and so have received the truth in the love of it, will find that it has, in some degree or other, the following effects, which may be called the experience of it.

First: Christian experience consists in the enjoyment of *peace* in the conscience. The work of righteousness, that the divine Surety wrought, has made perfect peace with God. Eph. ii. 14. 16. 2 Cor. v. 19. God is now *the very God of peace*, Christ is *the Prince of peace*—the word that proclaims the Saviour's work is *the Spirit of peace*. Surely then the necessary effect of the gospel known and believed, must be *peace* in the conscience. For as the knowledge of God and his law gives the guilty conscience torment; so the knowledge of the ATONEMENT, or full, free, and everlasting forgiveness by the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Now this peace of conscience

conscience which always, in some degree, follows the belief of the truth, arises *merely* from the blood of Christ, as it freely flows in the gospel proclamation, to sinners of all nations, ranks, and degrees. Hence it appears that true peace does not arise in the guilty conscience, from any thing that the sinner by reflection finds in himself, or from consideration of what he at any time has done, or under any influence whatever has been enabled to do; nor even from any evidences of a true work of grace in his soul; but simply and alone, from the exceeding abundant grace revealed in the gospel, which becomes his hope. Nothing, therefore, can be more evident, than that he is under some fatal mistake, about the very nature of the gospel, whose faith does not bring peace to his soul. Either he has some suspicion that the blood of Christ *alone* is not sufficient to cleanse *him* from all sin—that it is not so free as to be for every sinner as a sinner that believes it, or that some work of the spirit must be perceived in his soul before he must take the comfort which the gospel brings: which mistake, however small it may seem, if not corrected, will prove destructive. It is true, many are crying peace to themselves, when there is no peace; but then every kind of false peace flows from some mistaken notion of the gospel; from something different from that, which removes the ground of all fear and torment in the soul. Peace coming in this way may be said to proceed from believing: but from believing what? Not that God is well pleased in his Son, but that we are properly principled for receiving Christ, or something of that nature, under some other name. True peace leads the sinner to an absolute and immediate dependence upon the Lord; and so restores him that from which he fell: while every

false peace (as in some form or other it leads to trust in something within) cherishes and promotes that awful apostacy, which began in self-dependence.

Secondly: the believer experiences the meritorious righteousness and perfect atonement of Christ, to be a sufficient encouragement, to give him boldness and access with confidence at the throne of grace. Many have quarrelled with the *Pharisee* mentioned in the parable, Luke xviii. on account of the haughty manner of his approach to God, who yet, in reality, come in the very same way themselves. But those who have been taught of God, find no other ground of encouragement and confidence than what the *Publican* had. Under the most aggravated sense of guilt, and conviction of many sad and shameful deficiencies, they derive all their encouragement, from having such an atoning sacrifice to look to—such a faithful God to trust in—such an altar to offer up their prayers and praises upon—such rich incense to perfume them with, as the Mediator's intercession, and such an high priest over the house of God. They mourn indeed over sin with bitter lamentation, abhor themselves as the subjects of it, and watch over it as their worst enemy; but do not take their lamentations, abasements, &c. into consideration in their approaches to God, but, looking to the propitiation, say, *Have mercy upon me O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgression:* many who *profess* to draw nigh to God in this way, have nevertheless the full testimony of their conscience, that in all their approaches there is still a sad distance between God and them*. Yet if

* What follows to the end of this paragraph would require to be a little guarded, lest it should be construed to mean, that

if at any time they can approach the throne, in the persuasion that they are less sinners than once they were—under a consciousness of more affection in their worship than usual, and less deficiencies—or in the belief that they are the children of God, they would have more encouragement, hope of access, and pleasure in their devotion. But this way of approach is founded in legality, manifests that the heart is not right with God, and is directly opposite to the new and living way of coming to him. Heb. x. 19. 22.

Thirdly: in these things, and in this way, the believer has the joyful experience of *communion with God*. Communion signifies fellowship, common possession, or a partaking of the same thing; and communion with God consists in being pleased with, and taking delight in, that which is the centre of his delights, with which his smiles, or the manifestation of the light of his countenance, are always connected. Nothing deserves the name of communion with God, but that pleasure which arises in the soul from understanding and knowing the Lord, who executeth loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight,

the Spirit of adoption, and the testimony of a believer's conscience to the influence of the truth upon him, are inconsistent with his coming to God in the new and living way. Surely the author could not mean this, and the Apostle, on the contrary, says, "Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. 1 Joh. iii. 21. 22. referring to our Lord's words, Joh. xv. 7. The fact is, though Christ is the alone way of access to the Father, yet no man can draw near in this way, or have true confidence before God through him, while he is conscious of allowed hypocrisy or want of love to the brethren; the scripture repels such confidence, (Isa. i. 15. Mat. v. 23. 24. Ch. vi. 14. 15. Mark xi. 25. 26), and the meditation of Christ was never intended to support it.—Ed.

light, saith the Lord, Jer. ix 24. If we would know when this grand exhibition was made on the earth, the voice from the excellent glory informs us, when pointing to the obedience and suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" Whoever therefore, is well pleased with, and delights in the person and work of Immanuel, has communion with God in his blessedness, even fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. But this is very different from what is commonly, though profanely, called communion with God, which arises merely from *self-love* and *self-conceit*. Some are confident they hold communion with God; bask before the sun of righteousness; dwell upon the Mount; and have frequent Bethel-visits, because they have some impulses in their duties, or secret whispers, which they call the witness of the spirit, that God loves them far above the greater part of the world; which leads them to talk highly of eternal things, such as, personal election, covenant transactions, and unchanging love, particularly redemption, the final perseverance of the saints, and the enjoyment of eternal glory*. And while this is the case, as a certain author observes, "Even pride itself will prejudice them in favour of that which they call Christ. Selfish, proud man naturally calls that lovely, that greatly contributes to *his* interest, and gratifies *his* ambition."—To be upon the Mount, is to understand and delight in what was declared there. To have a Bethel-visit, is to behold heaven and earth united, and an intercourse opened between God and man, in the person

* It is not these *doctrines* that are intended to be censured, for they are great and glorious in their own nature; but the *abuse* of them.

person and work of the mighty God of Jacob, manifested in the flesh. To behold all salvation and all desire in Christ—to rejoice in him having no confidence in the flesh, and to glory in this, that we understand and know the Lord as *a just God and a Saviour*, this is communion with God, and nothing else deserves the name.

Fourthly : the gospel presents Jehovah's character in the most *lovely* point of view : so that no one can behold him as there revealed without *loving* him with a supreme affection. Indeed the beauty of God's moral image is set forth in the holy law ;—and in that representation he is infinitely worthy to be loved, by all intelligent beings ; and not to love him, in this view, is infinitely criminal. But while man's natural corrupt principles reign, so far is he from loving this infinitely amiable character, that his heart rises in enmity against it ; which indeed is an awful proof of that gross darkness which, through unbelief of his mercy, covers the soul. Now, tho' every rational creature is under obligations to love God for his own excellency (which every believer will do) and tho' not to love him with all the heart, justly deserves everlasting punishment ;—yet nothing is more certain, from scripture and fact, than that no person will love God in truth till his natural enmity is broken ; which is never done till the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, by the word of truth, quicken his soul. The natural man may love that notion of God which suits his carnal, deceitful, proud, sensual heart ; but every notion of him that does not give us just views of his glorious majesty, holiness, &c. tends to lead us into idolatry. Some are disposed to love God, because they conceive of him as a being so good and benevolent, that he cannot find in his heart to damn them for their sins.—

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Others feel an affection for the DEITY because they believe he has pardoned all their sins—exalted them above many of their fellow-creatures, and that all the joys of heaven are their own. And these we shall hear speaking in high strains, about sovereign, free, electing love; who yet, when the true nature of God's sovereign love is set forth, and his true character declared, will, like the antient Pharisees (who also believed a kind of *absolute Predestination*,*) *hate it*. Yet so essential is *love to God* to the Christian † character, that he who loveth not is not of God; for God is love. And upon the person who loves not our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, the most awful curses are denounced. To love God includes (1st) Love to that amazing grace, shown towards sinners in opening a way for their deliverance from deserved wrath. *In this was manifest the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world; that we might live through him. Herein is love;—not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John iv. 9. 10. John iii. 16. (2dly) In connection with the above, love to him for his special benefits and favours conferred upon us; for it would be an instance of the greatest ingratitude not to love him for the bestowment of favours so divine. (3dly) Love to that grand and most beautiful display of the divine perfections, drawn out in the obedience and atonement of Christ. Here the divine holiness shines forth with the brightest lustre, in its infinite opposition to sin, by appointing the HOLY ONE to magnify the law and make it honourable—the inflexible

* See Prideaux's Connection, vol. ii. part ii. p. 341.

† The passage referred to more immediately respects love to the brethren, which indeed arises from love to God.—Ed.

inflexible justice of God appears in its persisting in the punishment of sin according to its infinite demerits, even though his well-beloved Son must bear the weighty stroke; and every other divine attribute shines most gloriously.—Whoever acknowledges this, and loves this appearance of the true God, justifies the divine proceedings toward the angels that fell;—and also his dealings with sinners who break the law;—and owns, that if all the world had been consigned over to eternal death, the character of God would have appeared infinitely glorious. We shall hear many talking of beholding great beauty in Jehovah's goodness, mercy and love, who manifest no disposition to love him, for the tremendous display of his holiness and justice, in opposition to sin. Yet nothing but a full conviction of divine glory in the distribution of justice, will effectually stop the cavils of man's pride, against the procedure of divine sovereignty.

But here let it be observed, that no one can love God, and at the same time love sin. 1 John i. 6. No one can love God, and at the same hate his law, or speak unworthy things of it.—Rom. vii. 12. No person loves God who goes about to pervert the gospel of his grace, Gal. i. 8. Nor can any one love God, who does not love his brother, and study the good of mankind.—1. John iv. 20. chap. iii 17—Every one who loves the character of God is led to imitate it.

Fifthly : the gospel of grace gives the highest display of the great God : of his tremendous perfections, and their infinite opposition to sin ; so that wherever it is truly known and received, it cannot fail to implant the *fear of God*. The black character of the wicked is, that *There is no fear of God before their eyes*. Rom. iii. 18. Hence the Lord promises, in the new and everlasting

lasting covenant, to put *his fear* into his people's hearts. And this, we are informed, is the beginning of wisdom — Every doctrine, but the doctrine of Christ, tends more or less to keep out godly fear from the soul. Hence the gospel, though it is the very source of the joys of the Holy Ghost, strikes at the root of all false confidence, false joys and disobedience. A sort of fear or dread of God is sometimes awakened by the dictates of the natural conscience, and enforced by the written law ; but from the knowledge of the truth, the fullest impressions of the living God are made on the mind, and, of course, a more genuine and lasting experience of his fear is implanted there ; the happy and salutary effects of which, among many others, are the following : (1st) It begets conviction of sin in the soul, where the conscience has been seared, and enforces and confirms it, where slight impressions have been made. Nothing is better suited to awaken the attention to a just sense of sin, than the preaching of the cross of Christ, which makes known God's terrible wrath against it. Deep convictions of sin may be in the soul, previous to any saving illumination, and may occasion great terrors there, which may be stifled and expelled by a false hope : but when the perfection of the holy law appears to the sinner in the glass of Christ's sufferings, then he perceives that God is just indeed ! and that there is nothing about himself, but what exposes him to the most awful frown of Jehovah ; and from this source he learns more of the infinite heinousness of sin, and has the fullest display of its dreadful consequences. The fear of God, in the sense spoken of here, as proceeding from the knowledge of God in Christ, is perfectly consistent with the strongest confidence of Christ's ability to save to the uttermost—it pos-

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sesses the mind of a believer in the full assurance of faith—in the delightful enjoyments of love, and in the firmest persuasion of his own interest, in electing, redeeming, calling, and preserving grace. Yea this reverence and godly fear maintains in the soul, an increasing view of the evil nature of sin, while it grows in knowledge of, love to, and hope in, the gospel of peace: and is thereby distinct in its very nature, from that slavish fear, which arises from *pride*, working in a way of painful desire, attended with many fears, till it is crowned with the enjoyment of self-complacency in its own works,* quite the reverse of that fear, which fills the mind with torment, till it can say, with some assurance, *God I thank thee that I am not as other men.* It cannot be thought the true believer is led by his faith in Christ, and confidence of interest in him, to fear sin less than when he expected to be sent to Hell for the commission of it;—or is emboldened to transgress the least command in hope of impunity;

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* This *seems* to glance at a passage in Sandeman's letters on Theron and Aspasio, see 4th Ed. vol. ii. page 8, 20—*If so*, it appears that the author must have much misunderstood the paragraph, as it does not seem to be applied in the essays, according to its real meaning and intention. In order, therefore, to do justice to Mr. Sandeman, we have thought it necessary to insert the sentence at large.

His words are, "No man, then, by enjoying the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, can find any ground for being less afraid of sinning, or of its consequences, than he was before. For he no sooner indulges any evil affection, or any thought opposite to charity, than he loses that enjoyment, Paul supposes, that men who have tasted of this enjoyment, may, by indulging the passions opposite to charity, grieve the Holy Spirit, and so lose that enjoyment; so he says, Eph. iv. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.* They who thus grieve the Holy Spirit, must find mercy and forgiveness in the same way as at the first; and their love must be left to work, in the way of painful desire, and fear, till it be again crowned with enjoyment, and so perfected." Ed.

much less will he embrace that vile tenet, that soul destructive error, that believers are not under the law as a rule of conduct, and so cannot sin! Nor does the believer in Christ imagine that *his* sins are less displeasing to God, or less deserving of the curse, than those of the most profane; that sentiment is purely *Antinomian*, which teaches professors to think that *their* sins only deserve *fatherly chastisements*. What! does our profession of faith in Christ make sin otherwise than an infinite evil in us?—Or does God, like some indulgent parent, wink at our transgressions? Far be it from us to think so of him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; rather let us say that the least transgression in a professor, is attended with abundantly more ingratitude and baseness than in others, and will lead a real believer to the blood of Jesus for pardon as a poor sinner, who has no hope but in the promise of mercy to the guilty. But this sentiment wears a very hostile aspect towards those who get relief, when under a sense of guilt, by referring to their past experiences:—and indeed it must be offensive to our corrupt nature; because it necessarily leads the soul to live near to, and constantly dependant upon, an infinitely holy and sovereign God. (2dly) The true fear of God in the heart promotes a genuine spirit of devotion, and a suitable frame of soul for the whole worship of God. Many, out of a false notion of boldness, and eminent nearness to, and familiarity with God, are guilty of much impertinence and irreverence before him. Did but the fear of God prevail in our souls, we should not dare to approach him but with sentiments of deep abasement. Believers, it is true, do not come before the Lord as *slaves*, but with a nearness of *union* and *relation*; yet the subjects of the true grace of God are taught by
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that grace, to worship and serve him with reverence and godly fear—for our God is a consuming fire. In this way the angels worship, Isaiah vi. (3dly) By this fear the Lord preserves his people from falling away Jer xxxii. 10. By this the believer knows that God is well pleased only in his Son, and with *him* only as united to Christ. He perceives hereby, that if he turn aside from the hope exhibited in the death of Christ, there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume him. Under every fresh conviction of sin, it leads the soul to the atonement, as its only relief. In brief, it draws off the soul from every false source of peace, and keeps it fixed, trusting only in the free grace of God in Christ.

Sixthly: the faith of the gospel produces a *gospel spirit*, or promotes the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. The nature of a *gospel spirit* has been much mistaken. It is generally thought to consist in some kind of an affected *self-diffidence*, *tame submission*, and *universal catholicism*; or, in accommodating our views of the gospel to other men's notions, and thinking all good Christians, however widely their ideas of the nature and design of Christ's work may be. But the gospel of grace creates an utter aversion to this spirit, and also to that canting, whining, fawning way, that always accompanies it, and teaches its adherents tenaciously to hold the truth, boldly to maintain the faith, undauntedly to reject and expose every attempt to pervert the gospel, and to limit their charity to those who are of *the truth*, and make it manifest by hearing the great Shepherd's voice, and following him. The gospel, most certainly, promotes a spirit agreeable to its own nature, wherever it comes in power, for the believer, *behold-*

ing as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image. A gospel spirit is a spirit of humility, meekness, forgiveness, love, and compassion. As to humility, we have already taken a view of that which the apostle calls voluntary, or affected ; and in regard to genuine humility, it may be justly said, that no person is a partaker of it, who has not renounced those refuges of lies, which the natural man flies to, and fortifies himself in, and as a *naked sinner* believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. *Then*, and not till then, is the haughtiness of man bowed down, and the loftiness of man made low, when *the Lord alone is exalted*. By believing in, coming to, and depending upon, the atonement and righteousness of Christ *alone*, for peace, salvation, and eternal life ; the sinner forsakes his own righteousness, holiness, tears, sanctification, humblings, &c. This proud nature cannot bear. To do it, therefore, is the most humbling thing in the world, for the secret thought that there is something good, at least in the inclination, is the least thing a sinner gives up ; and while any such thought prevails, and the soul is influenced accordingly, the spirit of pride rules in the heart. But when Christ is received, humility ascends the throne, and governs the soul ;—the sinner then learns that there is an infinite disproportion between what he knows, and does not know of Christ—the strength of his faith in, and love to him—the degree of his likeness to his image, and his abasement before him ; and what there ought to be (from the consideration of the *cause* there is for these things) so that he considers himself as the least of saints, and abhors himself in dust and ashes. We shall not hear the sinner thus taught of God, talking high things of his own love, attainments, and humility ; for in the fairest view he can take of himself, he

sees.

sees abundant reason to be ashamed and confounded, and an absolute need of looking to that blood which cleanseth from all sin:—and his demeanor will be answerable hereunto.

Again : the truth believed produces a spirit of meekness, which consists in a readiness to entertain all that God has spoken, Jam. i. 21. and a temper of mind that suffers injuries without seeking revenge ; that quietly submits to the will of God, and is gentle towards all men. Col. iii. 12 Tit. ii. 3. Math. xi. 29. Of this spirit Jesus was our eminent exemplar, and all his genuine disciples, in their measure, copy after him. Yet let it be observed, that this spirit is by no means opposed to being valiant for the truth, for even the meek and lowly Jesus, our bright example, ever opposed *error* with a steady zeal, regardless of the highest names among men : witness his controversies with the Pharisees. This spirit of meekness will teach us, in all controversies about the faith, to distinguish between *persons* and *errors*—to avoid all bitterness and wrath, and evil speakings, in regard to the *former*, and to shew the warmest indignation, and most steady opposition to the *latter*. In short, it is in perfect friendship with that *zeal*, which promotes universal boldness for Christ, and carries the friends of truth above the displeasure and wrath of man.

Further : a gospel spirit is a *forgiving* spirit. This is so essential to the Christian character, that there is not the least shadow of real godliness without it, Matth. xviii. 22. to the end, also Mark xi. 25. The great motive to this is mentioned, Col. iii. 13. But it is much to be lamented, that while many marks and evidences of believing have been given, this doctrine has been but little spoken of, and less practised, even amongst the professed friends of *practical*

godliness. How often do we see a spirit of revenge in one professing Christian towards another, who not only let the sun go down on their wrath, but even for days, weeks, months, and years, retain their anger; and this even among persons of the same religious community! But how can such persons from their heart pray, *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?* How can they have fellowship one with another in the Lord's Supper, where the doctrine of forgiveness is illustrated, confirmed, enforced, and professed? Or what proof have such that *their* trespasses are forgiven them? For upon the principles laid down, Matth. xviii. it is plain, that notwithstanding a person may profess himself a saint, and be held in high reputation for his acquaintance with doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion; yet if he be not under the prevailing influence of this *gospel spirit*, he is none of Christ's, Rom. viii. 9. From such considerations as these, many may strive, from wrong motives, and to wrong ends, to acquire this spirit; but it never enters the soul till the gospel is understood and believed, and so is a part of gospel-experience.

Once more: the knowledge of the truth promotes a genuine spirit of love to the brethren. For as the gospel implants the love of God in the soul, so also he that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten, 1 John iv. 20. The ground of this love is expressed, 2 John, ver. 2. The rule of it; the *new commandment*, John xiii. 34. The example and motive to it, *Christ's love*, chap. xv. 12. and the manifestation of it in *deed* and in *truth*, in opposition to professing it in *word* and in *tongue*, is the great evidence of having passed from death unto life, 1 John iii. 14. 18. Yet this spirit pays the highest regards to *all* the precepts of the kingdom

dom of heaven, and leads those who possess it to be faithful to their brethren, and even sharply to reprove them, when they walk unworthily of the heavenly calling. Love will not suffer sin upon the brethren. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind: charity envieth not: charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* To conclude: a gospel spirit is a spirit of benevolence and compassion, Titus iii. 2. and leads to pity and relieve, as far as in our power, the poor, indigent, and afflicted, in imitation of him who went about doing good, and hereby we are followers of God as dear children. From what has before been observed, upon the believer's experience of the body of sin, &c. none will imagine that it is here insinuated, that the opposites of a gospel spirit are totally excluded. For if they were, it would be difficult to understand what is meant by the followers of Christ denying themselves—losing their life—taking up their cross—and warring against the flesh. Yet, nothing can be a greater absurdity than the notion of a *proud, spiteful, envious, unmerciful, hypocritical, hard-hearted* Christian: though such a character, making pretensions to the Christian name, may frequently be found even amongst those who bear the highest repute for *seriousness, and depth of experience!*

Lastly: the last kind of Christian-experience which I shall mention, is *practical godliness*, or observing all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. This has been generally ranked under the notion of *externals*, and he who ever insists much, upon the importance and necessity of it, is sure to procure the charge of *legality*. Even

as a scriptural defence of the *One thing needful*, draws forth the charge of *Antinomianism*. But the nature of a legal spirit is often mistaken, and even those very persons who are most zealous against it, are most frequently under the influence of it, for legality is a very subtle thing. If steadily and zealously maintaining, that no person is a Christian, but he who from the same motives, by the same rule, and to the same end, obeys the commands of Christ, as the apostles and primitive Christians did, be deemed *legal*, the writer frankly professes himself a *stubborn legalist*. Some in the heights of their zeal for doctrinal religion, and others, amidst their attention to the workings of their affections, have had but little regard, indeed seem almost to have forgotten, practical godliness, which is the immediate effect of true knowledge and experience. Others would seem to pay great regard and reverence to the kingly authority of Christ, who yet have taken upon them to cut and carve upon his commands, as most conveniently serves their wordly interest, and religious reputation. From this quarter we have heard much about what is *essential*, and what *non-essential*: what particulars we are to obey that Christ has commanded, and what might be left undone without incurring the censure of our Judge. But may we not modestly inquire, by what authority they do these things, and who gave them this authority? Indeed while the traditions of men have been mingled with the precepts and ordinances of Jesus Christ, there is great propriety in distinguishing between *essentials* and *non-essentials*; and if we may be permitted to assume for a moment the dictator's chair, the distinction may stand thus. ALL things that Christ has commanded his disciples to do, to the least jot or tittle of them, we will call **ESSENTIAL**: and every

every alteration of, and addition to them, we will venture to call NON-ESSENTIAL*, or so many cyphers, which the disciples of Jesus may censure, expose, and reject at pleasure. When it is said obedience to Christ's commands is *essential*, it is not to be understood, that through our obedience, in any sense whatever, salvation is obtained; but that an universal compliance with them is essential to the *fear of God*, the *love of God*, and the *obedience of faith*; and to say that because the commands of Christ are not essential to salvation, therefore I will not obey, proceeds not from the Spirit of truth, but from him who first taught man to sin with hope of impunity, and savours both of legality and licentiousness. No one who enjoys the powerful experience of the precious truth, will dare to make light of any duty the gospel enforces; knowing that the beginning of all misery in the world, was the breach of such a *positive* precept, as the generality of professors, in this day of refinement, would deem *trivial*, *punctilious*, *circumstantial*, or *non-essential*. He therefore esteems his word in *all* things to be right, and will not admit any such distinction between great and small in the commandments of Christ, as shall tend to make void, or cast the least contempt upon the kingly office of the Lord the Redeemer; much less will he prescribe *how far* Christ *ought* to require obedience. And, surely, if there is any truth in the scriptures, those ordinances and precepts enjoined upon, and observed by, the apostolic churches, are as much binding upon Christ's disciples *now* as they were *then*; and if obedience to the New-testament precepts was *then*, the standing rule of judging of those who made pretensions to the knowledge of

* They are not only *non-essentials*, but pernicious.—Ed.

of Christ, is not the same rule to be observed *now*? It is true there may be much external appearance, where there is no true faith, and where this is the case, the most splendid works, however useful to men, are, in his sight who judges not by outward appearance of no profit.

The inclination of the will to do whatsoever Christ has commanded, from those motives and to those ends that he requires, is the inward experience or effect, of the belief of the truth; and the external conduct, or actual performance of what the will determines, must of course be the effect, and so the experience, of the truth. And nothing can more properly be called *experimental-religion*, than, when Christ and his ways are set before us on the one hand; and the world, with its pleasures, profits, honors, &c. on the other: and the former cannot be attended to without exposing us to the loss of the latter, together with shame, reproaches, &c. if the knowledge we have of Christ proves powerful to incline us to revere his authority, and make us willing to suffer the loss of all things for his sake; chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; this is a proper *experience* of the truth and power of what we believe. And all experience without this is worse than nothing. If a man say, he loves his brother for the sake of the truth, and yet sees him in need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, it is plain he has no experience of the love of God dwelling in him. He professes, it may be, to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich, but when he sees his brother in needy circumstances, he finds no heart to imitate the divine goodness; from whence it is plain,

plain, that he does not stand *in the true grace of God*. He professes to trust in the Lord, but in refusing to lend unto him, by giving unto the poor, the hypocrisy of his profession is laid sufficiently open; it is plain he trusts in uncertain riches, and not in the living God, and his heart goes after covetousness.—*They* know most of *gospel-experience* who are most devoted in their lives to God; who are of a humble, meek, forgiving, loving, compassionate spirit, who deny themselves for the sake of Christ, and to promote the welfare of his church; who walk with God in their families, provide things honest in the sight of all men, observe the things Christ has commanded, and count all things but loss for the excellent knowledge of HIM. But alas! instead of the generality of professors proving their *faith* by their *works*, they offer no better evidence of it than either a confident assertion that they have exerted the appropriating act, or a long detail of their convictions, discoveries, experiences, and so on; all of which amount to nothing more than what the apostle James stiles a man's SAYING he has faith; which, in fact, is no evidence at all, unless it be confirmed by a good conversation.

SECTION III.

WHEREIN SOME QUESTIONS ARE STATED
AND CONSIDERED RELATIVE TO THE
SENTIMENT CONTAINED IN THIS ESSAY.

QUESTION I.

“ARE there no further joys to be experienced, than what arise from the hope of the gospel?”

Answer.

Answer. There are no true joys but the joys of the Holy Ghost; and the only way in which he leads to joy unspeakable and full of glory, is by testifying of the things of Christ which are written in the word of truth: so that unless the joys which we have are founded upon, or flow from, the hope set before us in the gospel, we have great reason to think they are not the joys of the Holy Ghost, Rom. v. 3. 1 Cor. xiii. 6. Psalm v. 11. But it will be inquired, "Am I to take no joy from perceiving the work of God in my soul distinguishing me from others? And can I come to no other certainty of my personal interest in Christ, than what arises from the belief of the gospel proclaimed equally to all?"* In reply to this, it is needful to inquire, whether your conscience bear witness before God, who knoweth all things, that Christ, as the free refuge of the guilty, is your only hope, the free promise of life through his name, your only encouragement to draw near to God, and his righteousness, your only title to heaven. If this be not the case, it is in vain for you to look for any other kind of joy; for it is impossible there should be any distinguishing evidences, or genuine experience in the soul, till Christ is formed there the hope of glory; without this all our duties are legal and selfish; and our hope and experience delusive. But if you have the testimony of your conscience before God, that the blood of Christ gives you peace, and that all the blessings you hope for, are viewed *as the reward of his work*; if the free gospel comforts, quickens,

* The answer to this question should be well attended to, as it sets forth the way in which believers attain to the full assurance of hope, or of their personal interest in Christ; and the rather, as several expressions in the foregoing essays seem, at first sight, to set aside the medium of proof here stated, but which the author could not intend in that view.—Ed.

quickens, and rejoices your heart, then you must be in a measure conscious, that Christ alone is your life, light, peace and joy;—and that of course a vital union is formed between your soul and him;—and this being accompanied by the genuine spirit of the gospel, and the fruits of righteousness, it is confirmed, so far as this evidence goes, that you are born of God; and to the truth of this the Holy Spirit bears witness, by showing that these are the genuine internal and external effects of understanding the truth of Christ, under a consciousness of which, you may rejoice that *your* name is written in heaven; bless God for his distinguishing grace, and take comfort from, and rejoice in, the doctrines of election, final perseverance, and eternal glorification. But even in this the true believer does not lose sight of the common salvation, nor does he build his assurance of eternal life, either upon his experiences, or the fruits of his life. This is an important point of doctrine, and should be well considered.

The believer is assured, by the gospel testimony, that eternal life is inseparably connected with the belief of the truth; so that he that believes SHALL be saved. He looks upon the genuine effects of the gospel, only as proving *his* connection with Christ, or that he is a child of God by faith in him, and then justly argues, *If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.* He does not view his experience or obedience as an intervening righteousness intitling him to Christ and eternal life, and therefore does not assure himself of reigning in life by virtue of them; nor yet does he appropriate heaven, &c. without evidence either from scripture, sense, or reason, that he has a right to make such a claim. The Christian's hope of eternal life is founded upon HIS word, who can-

not lie ; but unless there is substantial evidence of a personal connection with Christ, the assurance thereof is groundless and vain ; for as the gospel ascertains the certainty of eternal salvation to none but believers of the truth, so unless we have the witness of the spirit of God with our spirits (Rom. viii. 16, 1 John iii. 20, 21.) that we are of the truth, our assurance that Christ shed his blood for us in particular, and that of course eternal life is infallibly ours, is void of scriptural foundation. As the first Epistle of John was professedly written that *believers may know* that they have eternal life, the best way will be to take no man's opinion about the way by which we are to come to this knowledge, but each for himself consult that Epistle. We have been told by those who deny the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit, to make the gospel effectual, that "the appropriating act is necessary to a consciousness, knowledge, and enjoyment of the divine righteousness," which is consistent enough with their own plan ; because as that righteousness stands in the scripture, it is proclaimed indefinitely to the world, and therefore must need some power to give it efficacy to individuals, and they maintain, as above, that their appropriating act does this ;—whereas all who are taught of God in hearing the divine report concerning this righteousness, well know that it is not any working of their mind (whether it be called acting faith, appropriation, or by any other name) that gives knowledge, consciousness, or enjoyment of it ;—but that the spirit of truth, taking of the things of Christ which are written, and opening the understanding thereby, performs every divine operation, and draws forth every evangelical act, whether of mind or body. But if any professor of the gospel so far forgets the only ground of
hope

hope and confidence before God, as to take pleasure in the exercises of his own mind, and lives by his experiences, or the change within him, he so far is guilty of criminal indulgences, and rejoices in the flesh; which cannot be done but at the expence of turning aside from Christ.

QUESTION II.

“What are the proper uses believers should make of their experience?”—It has before been shewn what the genuine experience of the gospel is, and its happy and salutary effects upon the practice;—the sum of which is, that the ATONEMENT known and believed, gives rest to the guilty conscience;—the saved sinner lives daily by his faith, or that which the dying Redeemer declared FINISHED, and walks as becometh the gospel of Christ. Without these things are more or less known by us, we are not, at present, Christians: we have no right to believe that we are so ourselves, nor has any one authority to believe it of us. Not the *former*, because the witness of our conscience, and that of the Spirit of God, are against us: to persuade ourselves of it, therefore, is not only to believe without evidence, which is absurd, but also against the strongest evidence to the contrary. Not the *latter*, because the rule given to judge and be judged by, is—*By their fruits ye shall know them*. Without noticing the use commonly made of false joys, false confidence, &c. it may be observed that a believer might make the following use of his experiences, viz. (1st) What inward experience he has of the body of sin and death, the opposition of flesh to the gospel, and the deceitfulness, pride, and enmity of his heart, should be used as a prevailing argument for the necessity of looking daily to the

blood of Christ, for healing, cleansing, and pardon. (2) The trials in Providence that he meets with, the losses, disappointments, persecutions, and sufferings, which he is called to endure, should be used as so many proofs that this is not his rest, that he should not lay up for himself treasure upon the earth, but be daily *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* (3) The precious, peaceful, and comfortable experience of the truth, he should use as a confirming evidence of the gospel, which he has believed upon the testimony of God.—For he finds that to be true by blessed experience that he before received upon the authority of scripture. John iv. 42, chap. viii. 30—32. (4) He may also use his experience of the gospel, both his peace of conscience and his observance of those things that Christ has commanded, as a proof that his faith is not false or feigned, nor his hope in Christ vain. Rom. v. 1. 1 John ii. 3. (5) He may use his experience to lead him to the *cause* of it, when he needs a revival of it in his soul. But here let me be understood: I do not mean that he should renew his enjoyments by reflecting upon his former experiences; or that upon the ground of them, or through them, either as a medium, occasion, or circumstance, he should argue his right, or make his claim to present comfort; but simply this is intended; namely, that he may trace the streams up to the fountain; or by recollecting that Christ and his salvation are the source of all joy, peace, rest, and comfort, when he feels the want of these things he may apply to Christ to renew them, under the same character, upon the same ground, and with the same views as he at first looked unto him for salvation. All who are taught of God, are taught as guilty sinners, constantly

constantly to live by the Righteousness of the Redeemer, which is perfectly consistent with a full persuasion of personal interest in him.

QUESTION III.

“ Does the gospel hope admit of taking relief, under fresh charges of guilt upon the conscience, from any former works or experiences; or any present feelings or resolutions?” From what has been already observed, it is answered in the *negative*; for if any thing appears in the temper and walk of a professor, that the word of God condemns; he ought on that account to examine himself whether he be in the faith, according to 2 Cor. xiii. 5. and indeed if but a small portion of the fear of God be before his eyes, and his conscience remain tender, a suspicion of this will force itself upon his mind, whether he chuses to entertain it or no. But the question requires a more distinct reply. (1) There is nothing that persons are more deceived in than their *feelings*. Christ tells us of some whose joy, while it lasted, no one could question the truth of Math. xiii. 20. Luke iv. 20—30. And have not we seen many making a shining profession of religion, persons who have been high in our esteem as Christians, and the relation of whose experiences has often given us pleasure, who yet have turned back, and been a sad disgrace to religion, yea even to society? And is it not plain from hence, and abundantly confirmed by the word of God, that professors may have false hopes, false confidence, false comforts, and false joys, even while they have made the clearest profession in words? And if this be the case, then would it not be confirming the delusion, and sealing the destruction of such, to endeavour to comfort them, and cause

them to think well of their state from their former supposed experiences, or works, or present desires, or resolutions? But to say the best of this method, it is *uncertain*, and therefore uncomfortable and unsafe;—for seeing there have been persons who have been deceived this way, the leaders of this people set themselves to divide and sub-divide betwixt this *kind* of conviction, and the other—these kind of desires, repentances, and faith, and those which have been disproved; yet, after all, many are held in sad suspense through life, and awfully prove the deficiency of this hope and comfort in death! And as few are capable of making the necessary distinctions, their comfort, in general, depends upon their leaders, not upon God's testimony.—But (2) The present situation the mind is supposed to be in, is an objection to this method of procedure. For this state of mind renders a former *real* experience *apparently* delusive, and so cannot give relief:—no not even upon the supposition that a persuasion of our election will give peace to a guilty conscience: Because the very ground of the proposed encouragement, or source of relief, is called in question;—and indeed if under a sense of guilt any can take relief from their past experience, that very satisfaction which he finds should lead him to suspect the truth of his faith, hope and experience. For our past experiences are no otherwise evidenced to be the true joys of faith, and the real comforts of the Holy Ghost, than as the soul is disposed thereby to look directly to Christ alone for peace, when his conscience is charged with fresh guilt. (3) To make use of any former works or experiences, or any present feelings or resolutions to this end, is *in its own nature* wrong. I suppose it will be admitted that fresh-contracted guilt tends to work in the soul fear,
darkness,

darkness, and distress, which, as before observed, render a former *real* experience *apparently* delusive. But if this were not the case, can our past experiences, however genuine, remove the *ground* of our present fear, darkness and distress? If so, then we have found out something different from the blood of Christ, that can cleanse us from all sin! But supposing it possible, that a retrospect of our past experiences could remove the present sense of guilt, &c. what sense can we make of such an address to believers as the following, *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.* Col. ii. 6. A sinner does not at *first* receive Christ through the medium of his experiences, or upon the ground of his own working, under any consideration whatever; but rather as freely given for a sanctuary to the distressed, and the hope of the unqualified and guilty. If then, when guilt burthens the conscience again, we can get relief from any other quarter, than we did at first; that is, through any other medium than the gospel of the grace of God, we must certainly obtain it at the expence of turning out of the way to God; and instead of *holding the beginning of our confidence* (which if well-founded must be in Christ) *steadfast unto the end*, as we are exhorted, Heb. iii. 14. *we are moved away from the hope of the gospel*, Col. 1. 23. to another hope and another gospel: *Which indeed is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would PERVERT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* (Gal. i. 6. 9.) In short, if a believer can at any time take relief in this way, to say the least of it, he does not obey the exhortation to walk in Christ as he first received him. But it must be acknowledged this method of giving peace to the guilty conscience, is consistent enough with that doctrine which teaches the necessity of certain pre-requisites

requisites to qualify us for receiving Christ. But, (4) this method tends to give us slight notions of sin; which is a sufficient argument against it, if no other could be urged. It leads professors to think that *their* sins are not infinitely criminal, and as such deserve the wrath of God; which sentiment is purely *Antinomian*, and so, is opposed to Jehovah's moral government. Nor can any person have the fear of God before his eyes, who entertains such thoughts of sin. If every defect in loving God with all our hearts is infinitely criminal, as without doubt it is, then the fear arising from a consciousness of it cannot be removed by any thing less, than an atonement of infinite dignity and worth. Hence we may see one reason, why the Christian should live daily by the faith of the Son of God. (5) There is no *occasion* for such a procedure. For even while we view nothing about ourselves, but what leads to despair, yet against all hope from *within ourselves*, we may believe in hope of what is set before us *in the gospel*. It cannot be proved, by any logical deduction of one proposition from another, or a taking for granted certain premises, and then drawing rational conclusions from them, that we are believers in Christ, unless we rest in the persuasion, that *He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him*, and that the gospel is good tidings of great joy to ALL PEOPLE; and if the sufficiency and freeness of the Redeemer's work is believed; and thereby a persuasion arises in the soul from the faithfulness of God, that whosoever believeth shall be saved; that person will find no necessity to look to any other quarter for peace. But if our knowledge and belief of these things do not bring peace, without doubt we do not believe them; or to speak the most cautiously, we have
nor

our minds sadly clouded about them. In short, if we could reconcile our minds, to attend to the direction of God himself, we should see that he proposes nothing, to renew or revive the peace and joy of the most eminent saint, but that which he sets before the most guilty sinner, which may be seen, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 9. Rev. i. 17. 18.

Obj. "But did not David in a time of trouble and sorrow seek comfort and peace in referring to his past experiences?" (Psalm xliii. 5. 11. Psalm xliii. 5.) In reply to this it may be observed, that these psalms seem to have been composed by the same author, and upon the same occasion: probably David was the author of them, who at this time was banished from the House of God, either by Saul's tyranny, or Absalom's rebellion. He longs to be restored to the worship of God, with as much ardour as the long-chased hart, ready to expire, pants for the water-brooks. He looks back to the happiness he was used to enjoy in going to the house of the Lord, and contrasts it with his present forlorn situation: the effect whereof is, that *his soul is cast down within him*. However, he is far from looking to, or expecting help from, *himself* or any *human aids*; but in the midst of his grief he encourages himself *in the Lord*. He looks to his works of providence (ver. 6) which are the ground upon which he exhorts his soul to (ver. 1.) *hope in God*; even as he at another time says, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore, under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." If therefore this might be applied to Christian experience, it is a suitable direction in what way we should proceed to renew our comforts (viz.) looking from ourselves, and upon the ground of the faithful word, which re-
cords

cords the mighty acts of the Lord, hope in his mercy, and confide in his veracity.

The penman of Psalm lxxvii. had so far forgotten himself, as to look to his former experiences to relieve him, under the sense of present guilt, but found the method fail in the trial. Ver. 1—4. he gives a distressing view of that which troubled his conscience, and ver. 5. 6. he tries what looking to his past enjoyments would do for him. *I have considered the days of old, the years of antient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.* Thus we see he took the same method that is commonly recommended to, and practised by, professors in our day. But his conscience was too sensibly affected with the wrath that lay upon it, to take comfort from any such quarter—still he complains, ver. 7. 9. Convinced in the trial of the folly of this method, he acknowledges his error, ver. 10. *And I said this is my infirmity.* He tries another expedient, ver. 10—20. this is opposed to ver. 5. 6. This method then is quite the reverse of the former. Instead of looking to his former experience, his song in the night, &c. he looks now to the wonderful works of God, which were a type of the spiritual redemption by the greatest of all the divine works. If then we count the psalmist a pattern worthy to be imitated, let us follow his example, cease from this former fruitless method of looking for relief, and renew our joys, by looking to the *finished work* of the Redeemer.

To conclude: to know the truth as it is in Jesus, is to be *wise unto salvation*. To experience its genuine influences upon our souls, is to be *truly happy*. And to contend earnestly for it, against every opposition to it, or subtle corruption of it, is the Christian's highest honour.

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To profess the faith without enjoying the genuine effects of it, is to have the *form* without the *power* of godliness. To talk of experience without a scriptural knowledge of the Son of God, is *mere enthusiasm*. And the most flaming profession of knowledge and experience, without observing the things that Christ has commanded, is nothing better than a miserable delusion.

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THE
FAITH OF DEVILS
CONSIDERED.

PREFACE.

THE Scripture informs us, that the Devils confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, Luke iv. 41. but we cannot well suppose that God extorted this confession from them in order to confirm that truth. Jesus never refers men to the testimony of Devils for a proof of his divine mission; on the contrary, both he and his apostles had the utmost aversion to their testimony, and commanded them to hold their peace, Mark i. 25, 34. Luke iv. 41. Acts xvi. 18. Far less can we suppose that Devils confessed Christ with a view that men should believe on him; for this would be Satan divided against himself, and voluntarily overturning his own kingdom; whereas his business is to blind the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them, 2 Cor. iv. 4. It is therefore most probable, that these confessions were intended by Satan to discredit that precious truth which is the sum of the whole gospel, and the sole foundation of hope to guilty men. And if this was Satan's design, he has not been altogether disappointed; for though every professor of the Christian religion will readily admit that what the Devils confessed is a truth; yet many deny it to be the saving truth, or that salvation is connected with the belief of it; and the reason they give is, that the very Devils confessed and believed this truth without reaping any benefit from it, and men cannot be saved by the faith of Devils. Thus the grand

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PREFACE.

enemy of mankind, by confessing the truth, has made men to undervalue it, as a thing which cannot profit them; and has set them in search of something else for a ground of hope which it is supposed Devils cannot believe. By this means they are also led to conceive, that true faith is “not simply the *believing* of any sentence that is written, or that can be thought upon;” but some good motion or disposition of the will and affections towards Christ, of which Devils are incapable. So that both the *TRUTH* itself, and the simple *belief* of it, are in a great measure set aside, in order to keep clear of the faith of Devils.

THE author of the following pages, sensible of the odium cast upon the faith of God’s elect, and of the deep prejudices conceived against it, by this diabolical artifice, had in a former publication asserted, “That whosoever among men believes *WHAT* Devils do, about the Son of God, is born of God, and shall be saved.” This it seems gave offence to many, which occasioned his writing what follows, as a further explanation of the above proposition. His death, which happened soon after, prevented its being published at that time; but it is now presented to the public, exactly copied from the manuscript which he left behind him.

FAITH OF DEVILS, &c.

“*Let us alone, what have WE to do with thee thou Jesus of Nazareth?—Art thou come to destroy us?—I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.*—Mark i. 24.

—“*Devils came out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.*”—Luke iv. 41.

AMONG the various methods which the enemies of the saving truth of the gospel have adopted to shew their contempt of it, none have served their purposes better, than denominating it “*The faith of Devils.*” When the ignorant multitude inquire who they are that are so stupid as to think the faith of *Devils* can save them; their leaders have nothing more to do than fix the charge upon those whom they wish their deluded followers to shun, and their end is accomplished. For as every body is afraid of the *Devil*, it may be readily thought, that people will shun those who have nothing better for their justification, and the ground of their hope, than *what Devils* know and believe.

As the author of these lines has elsewhere asserted, to the no small surprize and disgust of many serious people,* that “whosoever *among men* believes *WHAT Devils* do about the Son of God, is born of God, and shall be saved;” he

takes the liberty to present them with a few more thoughts on the subject, which will either heighten their surprize and disgust, or convince them that their former sentiments were founded in ignorance, either of the creed of Devils, or the salvation of sinners; or both.

The writer declines entering upon a metaphysical disquisition of the existence and nature of Devils; as also that abstruse subject, the *origin of evil*; yet cannot well avoid just glancing at those words of Christ in John viii. 44. because they have some relation to the *Creed of Devils*. It is entirely out of my province to say how evil first entered the mind of a pure intelligence; but, to me, the passage before us seems to point out the nature of Satan's apostacy—"He abode not in *the Truth*." Now it is plain that "*the Truth*," here referred to, is that which Abraham believed and rejoiced in, ver. 56, and which those unbelieving Jews hated, and put Jesus to death, as a blasphemer, for confessing.—"*For he said, I am the Son of God.*"—"Because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." In doing which they did the works of the Devil, and so shewed themselves to be his children.

It appears then, that *Satan* had some intimation that God was to be manifested in *human nature*; and it is probable that it was given the angels, when man was made in the *image of God*: but, however that may be, it appears, from the above Scripture, that the mind of this angelic Chief was not well affected to it—and that he fell by apostatizing from it. When the fulness of time was come for God to be manifested in the flesh, to bruise the serpent's head; when the voice from heaven had declared, in reference to IMMANUEL, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*: Satan, the leader of the disaffection to this plan of manifesting the
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divine Glory, met him in the Wilderness to combat *the Truth*, that had been declared from Heaven; and to use all his power and sagacity to overthrow it: But found himself foiled in the attack; and, being overcome, he withdrew. From hence it is plain, that the Devil knew who Jesus was—what was spoken of him in the Old Testament, and what he came to work. If this wants further proof, it may be had from the following words—“He suffered them not to speak, for *they knew that he was Christ.*” If we further consider—the sagacity of the evil spirits—the opportunities they have had of hearing the scriptures—the readiness of Satan, when tempting Jesus, to quote the word that was written of him—his ability to transform himself into an Angel of Light, and the lead he takes in deceiving the nations by false religions; we shall have no reason to imagine that the Devils are deficient in any one point of scripture knowledge. And one has justly observed, “That though they endeavour to seduce men into heresies, they are too well informed to be speculatively heterodox themselves.”

But though this be plainly the case, it is equally true, that their knowledge is of no service to them; but on the contrary heightens their torment. The reason is obvious. God was not manifested in the angelic nature, “for verily he took not on him the nature of Angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” He did not come into the world to deliver the fallen Angels from those awful chains of darkness in which they are bound; but he took hold on the human nature to deliver the seed of Abraham from the wrath to come. Hence the Redemption of Christ is published in the Scriptures, for the salvation of men; but not for the salvation of the fallen Angels. The Truths that Devils be-

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lieve, therefore, do not contain their own salvation in them; else their believing would be accompanied with *joy, peace, love and obedience*. This they very well know, and therefore say, while they acknowledge him *the Christ, the Holy One of God*, “What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to *destroy us*?”—Seeing then that the destruction of Devils is contained in the testimony of Jesus, it is not to be wondered at, that their belief of it is attended with *terror and dreadful horror*; even as the law worketh wrath in the conscience of those who are convinced of being breakers of it, and so deserving the curse. But we may safely say, that unless the Devils believed that the Testimony concerning Jesus is *the truth of God*; and unless sinners believed the truth of the threatened wrath; neither the one nor the other would fear and tremble. From hence I conclude, that Devils do believe “The testimony that God has given of his Son;” and do also experience the genuine effects of it, SO FAR AS THAT TESTIMONY CONCERNS THEM.

Having shewn, in general, what Devils do believe; let us again advert to the obnoxious proposition, “Whosoever, *among men*, believes what Devils do about the Son of God, is born of God, and shall be saved.” One would have thought that whatever disgust arose in the minds of the religious in reading this Proposition, that some degree of reverence would have been paid to the scripture produced in favour of it, 1 John v. 1. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” From which it plainly appears, that the proposition of the Essay-writer, and that of the apostle John, must stand or fall together; and that if the one stands in need of correction, the other does so also; for it can hardly be supposed, after what has been said

said above, that any one will deny that the Devils believe that Jesus is the Christ. The objector, therefore, is driven to this alternative, viz. either to confess that *WHAT* Devils believe, without being profited by it, is the same that believing sinners are begotten again by, and saved from wrath through, or, that what constitutes the *essence* of justifying faith, and saves us, is the *manner* of believing. In regard to the *former*, I would know, whether the saved sinner believes any truth that Devils do not believe? If they do, what is it? Is it replied, that men see and believe that Devils have nothing to do with salvation, whereas every believer sees and believes his own salvation contained in the report? This I presume is the most formidable objection. I ask then, do not Devils believe this also? Do not they know that their own salvation is not contained in the record, but that the salvation of all that believe is? I can hardly suppose any one will deny this. And as to the *latter*, I call upon the objector to shew, that there is any other *manner* of knowing and believing a truth, among intelligent creatures, than by understanding it, and being persuaded of its reality and truth.

As to the *effects* that any testimony has, in consequence of understanding and believing it, that is quite another thing. But let us take a closer view of the subject before us. It is pretty generally agreed among professing Christians, that *Christ* is the *only* Saviour of sinners: and herein they agree with the apostles, who declared that, *There is salvation in none other*. But then a material difference arises between them, when they come to particularize their views of salvation by Christ alone. I have only, at present, to ascertain the apostolic notion of this subject; or to shew *what* that is which delivers

livers sinners from *the wrath to come*, and brings them to the eternal enjoyment of the divine favour. The doctrine of the inspired witnesses is this:—*That when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law. And We have redemption in his blood—the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. Thus Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. And as to that by which justification unto eternal life is obtained, the word thus speaketh, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth, as it is written, In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory; for, their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. All that believe, therefore, are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.* The apostles account for these things by shewing, that *Christ was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* The sole requisite then to justification unto eternal life, is the work which Christ wrought in his life, completed in his death, and proved its all-sufficiency, and God's good pleasure in it for that purpose, in his resurrection from the dead. Now sinners can have no knowledge of that grace, which reigns through this righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, but by the BIBLE, which is the only revelation that God has given of it: and from that book only through supernatural instruction. And the work of Christ is accounted for righteousness in believing, Rom. iv. chap. x. James 1. 18. The divine word does not take effect through any previous good dispositions inclining them to seriousness, &c. but *God who commanded the light to shine out of*

of darkness, shines into the heart, and gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Acts xxvi. 18. Isaiah lv. 10. 11. then, and not till then, a sinner is born of God, justified, sanctified, and saved. But does he know any thing now that Devils do not know, or believe any thing that they do not believe? The sum of what has been said above, is included in Simon Peter's confession, Matth. xvi. 16. Thou art Christ the Son of the living God—and in John's proposition, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." 1 John iv. 15. and chap. v. 1. and have we not seen that Devils have confessed the same glorious truth, Mark i. 24. Luke iv. 41. Does not Christ tell Peter that he had been taught that truth of the Father, and was blessed through the knowledge of it? As it is written, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." And does not John, under divine inspiration, declare, that such sinners are born of God? And what more does the writer declare in the proposition cavilled at?

But though that testimony which sinners believe and are saved by, is nothing more than fallen spirits believe; yet as it wears a very different aspect towards the one than towards the other, it has, of course, very different effects. The Devils hear the gospel revelation, and, without doubt, clearly understand that *Jesus came into the world to save sinners* of the human race; and that in performing this work for them, he has bruised the Serpent's head—destroyed the works of the Devil, and delivered Sinners from his service and dominion. The genuine effects of the belief of these truths, on them, must be enmity, hatred, and torment. Sinners of the human race, believing the same record, perceive and are assured of the pardon of sin, reconciliation
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ation to God, deliverance from all condemnation, and free justification to eternal life, to all that believe; the genuine effects of which will be peace, joy, hope, love, and thankfulness.

If we consider men and Devils lying in the same common state of just condemnation; then the different effects of *the same testimony*, will be similar to what we may suppose would take place, if there were two felons under sentence of death, and the King's pleasure should be read in their hearing, reprieving and fully forgiving the one, and fixing the day for the execution of the other. Would not the same testimony give joy to the one, and enlarge the torment of the other? Or if we consider Satan exercising tyranny over the human race, as the task-masters in Egypt did over Israel, or as a powerful tyrant does over his slaves; then the report of a mighty conqueror, having irresistible power, coming to inflict vengeance on the tyrant, and to set the slaves at liberty, if there is incontestible evidence of the truth of it, both will believe; but the effects, we may suppose, would be widely different. Even so the Devils believe the Gospel Testimony and tremble, dreadful horror seizes them; while sinners believe the joyful sound and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus we see that *the same truth* that torments Devils saves believing sinners.

But why do people make objection to that which is so obvious in the scriptures? The reason is plain. Self-righteousness and unbelief are at the bottom. The work which Christ finished in his death, reported in the word of Truth, is not thought, *in itself*, sufficient to justify the ungodly, and to give the *mere* sinner peace and joy as soon as he believes it. The objection goes upon the supposition, that there must be, if not good works, yet some good dispositions

positions in the mind to make our believing of the *right sort*. So that upon this plan the seriousness, heartiness, steadfastness, &c. of the person's mind in believing, distinguish his faith from all other *kinds*; in short, makes it *justifying faith*. It will be allowed, that man is a sinner, and undeserving of the favour of God, but then it is thought that *Grace* either common or saving rectifies the will, and enables the person sincerely, heartily, affectionately, and humbly (though very often doubtingly) to believe himself a Christian, and that God is very fond of him. There are various ways of expressing these things, from the "sincere desire to believe," up to "The appropriating act of Faith" which teaches men courageously to conclude that Christ is theirs, and they are his, without the least evidence of either. These dispositions, workings of the mind, or acts of faith, are often considered as concurring requisites with the work of Christ, to acceptance with God:—and to raise, cherish, and teach the proper use of them is the great work of our modern *Demagogues*. Hereby a different meaning is given to the Scripture terms *grace, faith, Christ, righteousness, Gospel* and *Spirit*, than is affixed to them in the apostolic writings; and this difference, let it appear in what form soever it may, the apostle teaches us to call a *perverted Gospel*. And though persons may boast of their sincerity and pious designs in opposing the revealed Truth; yet it is impossible that ever it should be opposed from any other principles, than that pride, enmity and deceit which are manifest in the Devil's opposition to it.

But let us enquire, for a moment, who they are that are *justly* chargeable with the faith of Devils?

1. The faith of Devils, is a faith *without love*.

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They hear, understand, and hate *the Truth*, and do all in their power to corrupt it : and in so doing are *haters* of God, and *destroyers* of men.—Because in the saving Truth the highest glory of God is manifested, and the greatest good to men made known. To shew enmity to this, therefore, is to discover the most ungodly and inhuman disposition. Now (as is observed in the essays) there are not wanting those among the sons of men, who see so much of the saving Truth as to hate it, speak evil of it and of those who maintain it, and go about to corrupt it.—And this is the very spirit of the Devil—such are, however much they may be shocked at the charge, enemies to God, and to the eternal happiness of mankind. For God is hated or loved, and mankind's best interest served or opposed, according as our minds stand affected to the gospel of Christ. The faith of Devils and of his children, appears different from the faith of God's elect, in that the latter works *by love* to that which the former hate. They have received the love of the Truth that they might be saved.

2. The faith of Devils is without *good works*. That which makes them Devils is their pride, ambition and dissimulation, and their works are in opposition to God's method of manifesting his own glory:—destroying men's souls by false notions of God, or blinding their minds by counterfeit gospels, 2 Cor. iv. 4; and chap. xi. 14. 15, defaming and persecuting them that are of *the Truth*, whose lives they cannot destroy. The faith of Devils then, as it appears among men, is a faith without good works. This the apostle James calls a dead faith, chap. ii. 26, and compares it to the faith of Devils, ver. 19, and the chief scope of this epistle is to detect and expose this kind of faith, and he particular-
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ly characterises it as without the good works of mercy in feeding the hungry and cloathing the naked brother or sister, ver. 14.—18. Where we discover, under a profession of religion, pride, ambition, avarice, dissimulation, perverting the scripture phrases to accommodate the gospel to the taste of men, and hatred to, and persecuti-on of, those who maintain the Truth in its native glory and primitive simplicity ;—there the disposition of Devils is seen, and there the children of the wicked one do appear.

3. Devils believe that the salvation of men is contained in the gospel ; yet they do not believe that Christ is *willing* to save *them*. Even so, many who are esteemed as convinced, seriously disposed people, and as having, what is called “ the good work ” begun in them, or, as others chuse to phrase it, are partakers of “ initial salvation ; ” believe that Christ is both able and willing to save *others*, but through their great humility ! (which in fact is intolerable pride and unbelief) are led to fear that Christ is not *willing* to save *them*. This kind of *rant*, of which there is plenty in various forms in the religious world, is occasioned by their natural bias to establish their own righteousness, and the unscriptural methods whereby their leaders retail their *perverted gospels*. It is plain, therefore, that their faith is no better than that of Devils, it being of no more use to them than theirs is. Indeed it is worse : for, as we have seen, the salvation of Devils is not contained in the gospel record, while that of men is.

But what shall we say of their pretended faith, who, in hearing the revelation of God, neither *rejoice*, nor *tremble*, but harden their hearts until their conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron ? Surely this is more dreadful than any
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thing yet mentioned; but awful as it is, it is far from being uncommon.

From the whole, let us take heed of agreeing with those who hate the truth, lest we be found to be despisers of "*The most holy Faith*," and, as such, when it is too late to be delivered from wrath by it,—"*wonder and perish*."

CONFESSIO

CONFESSION OF FAITH, &c.

THAT there is a God I believe, not from tradition, but from the strongest evidences arising from the things which he has made. But I am happy in not being left either to the dictates of natural reason or philosophy, to obtain the knowledge of this supreme and glorious Being, but have the sacred lines of revelation, which lead me into his *more* glorious works, in which I discern his real character.

The external evidences of the Bible being the word of God, are many; but its own intrinsic evidence is most glorious and satisfactory to me. But I am called upon to shew what I have been taught from these sacred pages. In reading the account given of *Creation*, my mind is struck with a different view of the DEITY, than philosophy can furnish me with, or help me to comprehend. Indeed, I there find it confirmed, that JEHOVAH is the one infinite, almighty, and eternal God: but am also informed, that the *one* divine essence has revealed himself, in order to exalt his own glory, and lay a proper basis of hope for his people, in *three distinct personal characters*, viz Father, Word, and Spirit; in *each* of which he displays every divine perfection. The chief object of this lower creation is MAN. Adam was made in the image of God, and was, by the great Creator, distinguished from all other creatures, by giving him the knowledge of his Maker. From which knowledge he drew the reasons of his conduct, and became conscious of the divine favour, so long as he obeyed the natural dictates of his *con-*

science. It is plain from his history given by *Moses*, and moreover by *Paul's* account of him, that all human nature was *federally* considered in him, and was to be propagated from him. Had he remained in a state of innocency, we must of necessity have received human nature in its original purity: but he, the fountain, being *corrupted* by the poisonous quality of sin being intermingled with it by the Father of lies, the *streams* are like to be defiled—which streams are we. That human nature is corrupted, I have a three-fold knowledge of. 1st. The Lord positively declares it in his word. 2dly. My own experience testifies to it. 3dly. Daily matter of fact in the lives of thousands confirms it. And this corrupt principle, I believe, is properly *inherent*, being interwoven with the very texture of our constitution. The following, I believe, are *some* of the unhappy consequences of the fall, viz. loss of original purity—loss of the manifestation of the divine good pleasure, an awful succession of innumerable evils; in which I include, a dark understanding, vicious affections, an evil conscience, and a stubborn will: in short, that we are naturally dead in trespasses and in sins. All man's natural knowledge, which before furnished him with reasons of duty, and taught him to walk humbly with his God, now, is so far from giving him comfort, or informing him how he may be reconciled to his offended Sovereign; that, so far as he retains it, he must be filled with horror and despair. But man being corrupted, his original impressions of Jehovah began to wear off, and through his own propensity to evil, and the enemies lying injections, he entertains false notions of God, and goes about upon some vain presumptions, to reconcile himself to the Lord, and obtain his favour; though *every* such attempt is a fresh
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proof how sadly he is fallen from his original knowledge of the *true* God.

In order that the divine character might be rescued from the misrepresentations man had given of it, as well as that the offence might abound, the moral law was added. This is a perfect transcript of the divine Being: it forbids sin, shews the evil of it, and condemns for it, and is under *all* dispensations a *rule of obedience*, and a fixed standard of righteousness. This revives the dictates of natural conscience, and enforces them; so that neither the law, nor the natural conscience, can work any thing in the *guilty*, but *wrath*. Both declare the necessity of an unspotted righteousness to appear in before God; both shew the impossibility of pardon, without perfect satisfaction being given for the offence; both teach, that where *mercy* is exercised, it must be in strict consistency with consummate justice, though neither the one nor the other can inform us where to find either. Now I believe that the GOSPEL is the *only* place where we can learn this: there, in the *finished* work of Immanuel, I behold a *just* God and a Saviour! Here natural conscience receives its fullest impressions of the divine character, and the holy law its highest honours, while mercy and truth, with resplendent glory, *unite* in the sinners salvation. But here it may be expected that I should be particular:—The gospel, I believe, is the production of infinite, eternal, counsel and wisdom; a plan formed, in all its beautiful connection, before the world began. That the ETERNAL determined to glorify his perfections in the salvation and glorification of an innumerable number of sinners, and to this end *personally* chose them *in his Son*, before the world began: and whatever distinctions may be made between the absolute decree,

and the foreknowledge of God, whoever admits the latter (and *who* so impious as to deny it) does in fact confess the former; for if Jehovah had prescience of all events that should take place in time, from eternity, then they must take place in the order in which he foresaw them, or his knowledge could not be perfect. I cannot think that either the happiness of his *chosen*, or the misery of the *rest*, is the ultimate end of election, but rather the praise of the glory of his sovereignty. Every *impotent* attack on this doctrine by the pride of man, I believe, is silenced in the *word of truth*. Further: I believe that God manifested his purpose of grace to man, after the fall, and that in the fulness of time God sent his son into the world, to bring the many sons to glory, whom he had predestinated to be heirs with Christ. This chosen race, indeed, in the eternal purpose, stood connected with Christ, their covenant-head; but when God brought his first begotten into the world, he *actually* took part with them in their nature; for both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of *one*. Hence, being their kinsman, he could righteously engage for them; but having to pacify God, and perform a work that should be beneficial to *others*, it became absolutely necessary that the mediator should be God. And moreover, it was required, that he be GOD-MAN in unity of person.

Again: I believe that *Immanuel* appeared under the law, as the representative of *his* people, in which capacity it was a righteous thing in God to lay on him the iniquities of them all, though it was an amazing display of his sovereignty; that by his perfect *obedience*, he fulfilled, in its utmost extent, whatever the law demanded: and by the complicated sufferings which he endured, when the *wrath of God* lay hard upon him,

him, sin received punishment to the *full* extent of its desert, and that divine justice could not require more satisfaction than it obtained in the death of Christ. I believe that Jesus, *as his people's Surety, died under the wrath of God*, and that his resurrection from the dead is an infallible proof, that the work which he declared *finished*, was well pleasing to God, and is sufficient *in itself* to declare him *just* in justifying the *ungodly* who believe, as they stand condemned by his holy law. Take away this substantial evidence of the sufficiency of the Redeemer's work, and I frankly confess, that I am without hope! Not that all men can say, nor all that I can *feel*, will quiet my guilty conscience; but from my inmost soul I believe, upon the fore-mentioned evidence, and its import, that the blood and righteousness of Christ *alone*, are sufficient to deliver me from all condemnation, recommend me to the favour of God, and give me a title to everlasting glory.

I believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles of our Lord, to record the transactions of his life and death, and the peculiar evidence of its extensive efficacy adverted to. This record which God has given of his Son, is the gospel, or glad tidings of the kingdom, and is an *universal* proclamation to *sinner*s in general, of pardon, justification, sanctification, and eternal life, as the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ. I believe that no preparations, requisites, or qualifications whatever, are required of the creature, in order to meeten him for this great salvation; but that, simply as a sinner, every one who hears the gospel is encouraged, upon the faithful word of God, to take Christ, and all the blessings of eternal life, freely.—Here I confess the necessity of the work of the Spirit of God. Man in his natural state may speculate

speculate upon the gospel, and obtain *natural* notions of these things, but no one ever did, or ever can, understand the spiritual import and glory of the gospel, but as taught by the Holy Spirit. I believe this glorious agent teaches *only* by the *written word*. The whole will of God is revealed there;—and he never works *separate* from, much less opposed to, it.

Now by his almighty agency *dead* sinners are *made* to hear the word, are regenerated thereby, and made new creatures. The word is the seed: the life of Christ is implanted in the heart of the *Redeemed* by it, John v.—24. He that hath my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life—is passed from death unto life. In this way, I believe faith is the gift of God, i. e. when the spirit of Truth enlightens the understanding, to perceive the spirituality of divine Truth, his teaching is attended with demonstration and power, which works *in the soul* a *real* persuasion of the nature, extent, and efficacy of the finished work of the Redeemer; this persuasion, I believe, is grounded *solely* upon the record which God has given of his Son, in consequence of which the soul comes to, and receives, the Lord Jesus as a present Saviour.—Notwithstanding I would acknowledge, there are degrees of faith, and must necessarily be so while we know but in part. If I am desired to define faith more fully, I beg leave to quote *Paul* upon the subject: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* I believe

* It is believing the record which God has given of his Son: but I hope I shall not be misunderstood here.—I believe a natural man may have a full persuasion of this, in the sense in which he understands it, but no natural person can understand it. The great difference between true converts and all others, is pointed to by our Lord, Matth. chap. xiii. One *understands* the word of the

believe the soul becomes *justified* by the righteousness of faith, or that divine testimony which faith receives as *infallibly* true. Justification is a law term, and consists in a judge declaring a person acquitted from all judicial charges; righteous in the eye of that law by which he is judged. In justification, the righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to the believer, who is made the righteousness of God *in him*; in the same way as Christ is *made sin* for his Elect. In this act, I believe the subject is considered as *ungodly*, so that neither in the divine eye, nor in the sinner's, is there any respect had to any worthiness *in the creature*, but this righteousness is unto and upon all them that believe, for there is *no* difference.

All who believe, receive full, free, and everlasting pardon of all their sins: *full*, because his blood cleanseth them from all sin; *free*, because it is *forgiveness* of sin according to the riches of his grace; *everlasting*, because Jehovah blots out their transgressions as a thick cloud, and will *no more remember* their sins!

I believe further: that this glorious gospel implanted in the *heart* in regeneration, is the *sole* spring of sanctification. Justification is a single act of grace, and terminates in a freedom from punishment, and a right to life. Sanctification is a work within us, is progressive, and terminates in the destruction of sin's reigning power. The more the spirit of Truth increases our knowledge of, and faith in, the gospel; the more our understanding is enlightened, our affections spiritualized, our conscience purged, and our will bowed, and in this consists the progress of our sanctification, 2 Cor. iii. 18; though

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the kingdom, the other understands in a wrong sense, and therefore cannot have equally precious faith with the apostles.

I am very far from thinking that nature is converted, or the flesh spiritualized. Gal. v.

The necessary and inseparable consequence of this, is *good works*. Sanctification through the Truth is the cause, good works the effect; sanctification the root, holiness the fruit—I believe that though good works are not our title to, or qualification for, justification—or cause of our sanctification—yet that they are evidences of *both*, so that without them our profession is vain, and our faith dead. To constitute a work *good*, I believe the *love of God* must be shed abroad in the heart, as the living principle of action. The revealed will of God, in which I include the *moral law*, must be the rule, and the glory of God the end of our obedience. The evangelical motives to them, the glory of God, the mercies of God, the end of election, calling, and adoption: their use, to prove the truth of our profession before men—to stop the mouths of opposers—and for the use and benefit of men:—Thus I believe, that wherever the gospel is known clearly, it will be felt powerfully, and where it is *felt* powerfully, it will produce the fruits of righteousness in the life. In this way which I have been declaring, I believe that the eternal purposes of Jehovah, concerning the salvation of his elect, are brought about.

Now as the apostolic ministry consisted in teaching the things concerning the *kingdom* of God, as well as preaching Christ and him crucified; it may be expected, that I should say something about my views of the gospel church state.—The Jews looked for the appearance of this kingdom; but as they had been mistaken about the appearance of the promised King, so also they were in the nature of this kingdom. John the Baptist proclaimed it *at hand*; so did Jesus; but it never was established till Christ ascended

ascended into the heavens, and angels and principalities became subject unto him. The *nature* of this kingdom is spiritual, John xviii. 36. My kingdom is not of this world. The bulk of its subjects are in glory, beholding the King in his beauty; and it makes its appearance here among the *few* who are of the TRUTH, and hear Christ's voice. Hence I conclude, that it cannot be *national*, and that every national establishment, and every dissenting congregation, framed upon human authority, and cemented by secular ties, stands opposed to this *heavenly kingdom*. The truth of Christ, or the *pure* gospel of salvation, is the foundation upon which the New Testament church is built; and by the same precious truth, its subjects are cemented. None in heaven or earth have a right to appoint *laws* in this kingdom, but Christ the anointed King; and no person can truly acknowledge him as King in Zion, that does not obey the laws which he has made. Now for the test of every one's obedience who confess him with their mouth, as well as precious means of drawing near to, and holding communion with, him, he has appointed several ordinances, among which are *Baptism*, and the *Supper*, which represent in public signs the blessings of this kingdom. Neither of these ordinances can be of the least service to any but true believers, because none but *they* can understand those things which are therein represented.

That Baptism is a standing ordinance in the church, I believe from the nature of the kingdom;—it cannot be moved, Heb. xii. 28. But to break the laws, is the most effectual way to undermine it. The design of the ordinance—a practical renunciation of *error*, and acknowledgement of the truth—a protest against the prevailing traditions of the age, and a confession
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of evangelical truths ; and moreover, from the promise of Jesus to be with his ministers to the end of the world, in enforcing and administering it. True believers are the *only* proper subjects ; and the only mode of administration, immersion of the whole body in water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. To change either *mode* or *subject*, under any pretence whatever, is an impious attack upon the sovereignty of Christ our King ; and I hope ever to maintain the importance and necessity of this gospel institution.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper represents disciples united in *one* body, partaking of their one common Lord in all his salvation fulness, by the outward symbols of bread and wine. Believers here behold *one* glorious righteousness, the ground and hope of their calling ; *one* grand fountain of spiritual supply, alike common to them all :—here the distinguishing work of the Son of God, received by faith through the eating of the bread, and drinking of the wine, destroys those distinctions between them, which their pride would prompt them to make. Beside these two leading ordinances, there are preaching the word, public and social prayer, mutual conversation, and the new command of brotherly love to be attended to. The church, I believe, is vested with power to chuse her own officers, to receive members, and expel them when unruly. The proper officers are *Pastors*, *Elders*, or *Presbyters*, who are to give themselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word : and *Deacons*, whose employment is to receive contributions, take care of the poor, and serve tables. The communion of saints is a subject so copiously insisted upon in the New Testament, that *no* persons can make *that* their rule of faith and practice, and live in the neglect of it. The
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confession of the mouth can only be confirmed by a *practical* submission to the laws and ordinances of this heavenly kingdom : nor can I see what *substantial* evidence any professor has of being a disciple of Christ's, while he lives in the known omission of any ordinances of the gospel dispensation. In an uniform attention to these things, the believer is bid to expect increase of grace, and may *scripturally* hope, that he shall hold on his way, and is authorized to take the comfort of all those promises which have reference to the final perseverance of the saints in faith and holiness. The doctrine of a *true* believer infallibly enjoying the heavenly inheritance, I from my heart believe—the covenant of grace, the perfections of Jehovah, the union between Christ and his people, and the precious promises of a faithful God, all secure it. But I have no other idea of a believer persevering, than of one running the race set before him, looking unto Jesus, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. To conclude:—I believe that the saints shall have their bodies raised from the dead, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; that all the redeemed shall be everlastingly filled with the fulness of him that filleth all in all; but that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment!—That whatever reflections corrupt men may cast upon the God of purity, as being in any sense the cause of sin, or any of his decrees the cause of the sinner's damnation, it will then appear that sin originated in the creature, and that sin *alone* is the cause of their condemnation. If it be thought necessary that an apology should be made for expressing myself positively, I have only to say, that I have, by request, taken in hand to set forth in order, a declaration of those things which are *most surely believed* among us. But however

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positively, I hope in the fear of God to maintain *divine truth*. I have every reason to be diffident in myself: I hope I am conscious, in some measure, what a poor, weak, fallible creature I am, and how much I stand in need of the prayers of the weakest saint: a prevailing sense of which, I hope, will keep me humble, watchful, and prayerful, and ready *candidly* to hear the reproof or instruction of any of my brethren. Brethren pray for me, that I may study to approve myself unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and be, in all things, praise-worthy—an example to the flock. *Amen.*

THOUGHTS

THOUGHTS

On the difference between

SANDEMAN AND CUDWORTH.

BOTH *Sandeman* and *Cudworth* agree, that “*God is well pleased in his beloved Son.*” That this is the sole requisite to justification: that the most guilty are accepted herein, without more; and that whoever believe this, are the blessed persons to whom God imputes righteousness without works:—that this is the central point and spring of true Christianity; so that to seek acceptance and peace in any other way whatever, is to contradict this truth, and springs from pride and self-righteousness. But their difference lies here:—*Sandeman* pleads that the great difficulty with a sinner is, how the just God can become a Saviour, or be just in justifying.—That the gospel solves this by the testimony before us; that all the joys a person has in first believing is, that such a righteousness is provided, and that there is a *possibility* of his being saved:—that such an one labours in painful desire and fear, till he becomes assured of his own part in the divine righteousness; that this makes out his personal claim, and in this way he arrives at a particular application of what he before believed in general.

On the other side, *Cudworth* pleads that the pinching point with a sinner is, not simply how shall I know that the just God can be a Saviour; but how shall I have such a righteousness as he requires? That the testimony before us answers

this, by bringing the divine righteousness near in the gospel, and conveys it in such words as directly to shew, that it is for *every creature that hears it*. That without any further enquiry, the guilty sinner may say, “*He loved me, and gave himself for me,*” and assure himself of eternal life, without taking into consideration any effects of the gospel whatever. *That it is this appropriation that gives a conscious possession and enjoyment of that which justifies*; and that the want of such an appropriation, is that sin of unbelief which has condemnation entailed upon it.

I agree with both, that God is well pleased in his Son, and that the work of Christ is the *sole* requisite to justification. *Sandeman*, notwithstanding the many great things he has said, is most certainly very wrong in pleading that the gospel record believed, gives no more comfort to the mind than what a *bare possibility* that he shall be saved, will afford; for it is plain, that no one can believe the gospel report, that excludes himself from the number of those to whom it says, “*He that believeth shall be saved.*” And it is equally plain, that when the gospel is believed, peace of conscience, or a deliverance from that wrath which the law works, will be the immediate effect, which could not be if there was nothing more in the testimony than a *mere possibility* of salvation. Faith is the substance of things hoped for; and when any one is begotten again by the report of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, he directly has a *lively hope*, grounded upon that word which he believes: so that if any one proceeds to labour in a way of painful desire and fear, to come to peace of conscience and a gospel hope, nothing is more plain than that he hath not heard and learned of the Father, for *such* come to Christ, and find rest to their souls. He that believeth enters in-
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to rest, and ceases from any work whatever to obtain rest. So that it is plain, that to labour in painful desire and fear, in order to get peace of conscience, is totally incompatible with the belief of the truth.

Cudworth, without doubt, is right in pleading that the gospel contains more than a possibility of being saved; but is wrong in saying, *that eternal life is given to every hearer of the gospel*; for the gifts of God are without repentance;—and it is plain, many hearers of the gospel will perish eternally. Besides, if every hearer has eternal life given him by God who cannot lie, then it follows, that such a gift is not sufficient *in itself* to secure that life to any one;—so that there must be something more (however much *Mr. Cudworth* exclaims against it) to secure this gift, seeing that many to whom the gift itself is made, finally perish. Now nothing is more evident from *Mr. Cudworth's* own words, than that he makes the same use of "*Appropriation*" that *Mr. Sandeman* does of his "*Painful desire and fear*,"—for he tells us, that it is necessary to the consciousness or enjoyment of that which justifies:—neither is there any account in the scriptures of a person's first believing, being any thing more than a persuasion that what is testified in the gospel, is true. And when any person is taught of God, in hearing the gospel, to believe it, both the painful desire and fear, and the appropriation, are superseded; for it is the sovereign power of God, or the Spirit of truth accompanying the written word, that gives the truth a possession in the soul; and this brings a consciousness and enjoyment of that which justifies without leaving room for what *Mr. Cudworth* would plead for; whereas both he and *Mr. Sandeman* suppose it possible for the truth to be believed, without the enjoyment.—

Indeed, *Cudworth* altogether denies the influence of the Spirit, and so substitutes his own appropriation in its place. Neither the one nor the other of their phrases are scriptural, nor the ideas conveyed by them ; the truth lies between them both :—Thus, when any sinner is taught of God to believe on Christ, he is justified, and obtains peace by what he believes ; but he cannot have assurance that he has believed, until his faith works by love in keeping Christ's commandments.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

“ Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Gallilee, and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”—Acts ix. 31.

THE history of the Church of Christ is full of instruction to the sons of men. It presents to us on the one hand the awful perverseness of human nature, and its opposition to the glory of God ; and on the other, the almighty power of Jehovah, in overcoming every obstacle to the progress of the gospel, and the exceeding riches of his grace towards its opposers, the objects of his pity. Here, therefore, men may learn more just views of the Supreme Being, and of themselves, than they can possibly acquire from books of human composition ; and may be taught with what reverence and gratitude they ought to contemplate his character, and with what humility they ought to regard their own.

The Church of Christ is described in scripture under a two-fold view. *First*, as the Universal, or Catholic Church ; and, *secondly*, as the visible representation of this in an assembly of believers.

By the former, we are not to understand the Church of Rome, who proudly arrogates to herself the title of Catholic, nor indeed any national or congregational church under heaven. But the Church of Christ properly means the whole
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company of the redeemed, styled his body. It consists of all those who have died in the Lord, and who are now in heaven, beholding the King in his beauty; of all true believers now upon the earth, and of all who shall be gathered unto Christ to the end of time, when the Temple, Church, or Body of the Redeemer shall be completed. No revolution upon earth can affect this church in the smallest degree: it cannot be moved: even the dissolution of all things cannot disturb it, for *it is not of this world*, and is immoveable like the throne of the Redeemer.

By the term *church*, in the New Testament, we are taught to understand also the visible appearance of persons in the faith of Christ; or in other words, the visible church is a company of professed believers in the gospel, however few in number, and however despised by the world, who have among them the true preaching of the word of God, the right administration of the ordinances of Jesus Christ, and the faithful exercise of that discipline, which he has prescribed in the New Testament. Wherever there is such an assembly, without doubt there the visible church of Christ appears. The church at Jerusalem, the church at Rome, and the church at Ephesus, were all of this description. The apostolic writings nowhere give us the slightest intimation that such a church should be national; for when speaking of the societies of believers scattered throughout different provinces, they never designate those in one province as *one church*, but as *several*. Hence we read of the *churches* of Judea, of the *churches* of Galatia, the *churches* of Macedonia, &c. Besides, these assemblies are represented as being in the midst of their enemies, ruled by the rod of the Redeemer's strength, the sceptre of his grace, the word of his kingdom. In the preceding

ceding chapters we are informed, that they suffered persecution from the world; and indeed, they are forewarned to expect this in their way to the heavenly kingdom until the end of the world. Faith and *patience* are their prominent characters; and these can never be accordant to the name or character of any national church on earth.

The visible church, through the fury of persecution, may be moved from one place: but then such events are made, through the infinite wisdom of God, to promote the real welfare of the true Church. This was the case in that part of their history before us. Saul, the chief persecutor, being called by divine grace, preached the faith which he once destroyed; and the Jews restrained by Providence, and deprived of their leader, became less violent in their proceedings against the Christians, and thus the churches in Judea had rest. They could then attend to the instituted order of the gospel, and were edified together in love, walked in the fear of the Lord, and enjoyed the comforts of the Holy Ghost. They also increased in number, and in all the increase of God.

What I intend from the words of the sacred writer, is to lay down and illustrate some observations founded upon them. The observations arising from them are the following:

1.—That the instituted church order of the gospel is calculated for edification.

2.—That where edification is promoted, it will be manifested by the disciples walking in the fear of the Lord.

3.—That the comforts of the Holy Ghost are intimately connected with gospel edification, and walking in the fear of the Lord.

4.—That churches thus organized, and walking together under the impressions of the fear of

of God, have scriptural grounds to expect, that they shall be multiplied.

I. By the instituted order of a gospel church, I understand that order and those rules, which Christ and his apostles have left upon record by example and precept to be attended to by disciples unto the end of time: particularly such as relate to the administration of his word and ordinances, and the upright preservation of the discipline of the house of God. As to the ordinances of the gospel, they are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the reading and preaching of the word, prayer, and the ordinance of brotherly love, in the outward expressions of it, as practised stedfastly by the first christians under the direction of the Apostles, Acts ii. 42. Unless these be fully attended to, all professions of religion are wholly vain. It is but mockery in the extreme to call Jesus Lord, and not to do what he has commanded: and no church can, in the judgment of gospel charity, deserve the name of christian, which does not observe his institutions from a sense of his authority.

The discipline of the church is to be found in the New Testament, in the express commandments of Christ and his apostles, or in the approved example of the first churches. All the schemes of men must be wholly excluded from it; the government is upon the Redeemer's shoulder, and to him alone must be in subjection. Now on the head of discipline, we are taught (Matt. xviii. 15. 18, that the power of binding and loosing is vested in the church properly organised: see also Matt. xvi. 19, that it is given purely for the brethren of Christ, and not intended for the world; that its end is for the maintenance of purity in faith and brotherly love upon the plan of the gospel, and the whole of this painful work is to be done in the name
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of the Lord Jesus Christ, not in their name, nor after their own inclination, not from strife, ill-will, or umbrage, which one party may entertain against another, and that it must be conducted by the word of God and prayer. This church, in its discipline, is subject to no power or authority but that of Christ; and is the only mean which has been appointed by its exalted Head for collecting the outcasts of Israel, and gathering his people into one. The first churches are left as patterns to all that should follow, and hence it must be impious and presuming to endeavour to establish an order different from them.

Having taken a brief survey of the instituted order of gospel churches, it remains that I should shew that it is suited to promote edification, and this we shall find true of every part of it, Eph. iv. 11, 16.

As to the reading of the word and the labours of the gospel ministry, it is by means of these that we receive our first instruction in the knowledge of God; and for the improvement or edification of the disciples they were expressly intended, 1 Cor. xiv. 3. 5. 12. Hence it is plain, that he who preaches the word, must have an understanding of its true meaning, else how can he speak to edification? Those who despise these appointed means of instruction, which are so well adapted to correct us in righteousness, have no ground to expect the blessing of God, or the edification of their souls. On the other hand, all the disciples of Christ should study to have the great ends of edification promoted by their attendance on divine ordinances: this should be their great object; nothing inferior to this should excite them to hear or to read the word of truth.

Another mean of edification in a gospel church is, the assembling of themselves together to exhort

hort one another. That this was the practice of the first churches is plain, and that edification was the end proposed, is equally so. Heb. iii. x. chap. 13. 24. 25. In these meetings, the disciples have an opportunity of warning each other of the prevailing errors of the times, and by contrasting truth and error, to build up themselves upon their most holy faith. For this Paul commends the Thessalonians, and repeatedly exhorts them to continue in the practice of it. 1 Thessal. v. 11. Hence we may infer, that if we would be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises, we ought not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Let us, in such meetings, be doing all things to edification, and cautiously avoid what Paul warns Timothy of. 1 Tim. i. 4. In these assemblies of ourselves together, let us ever keep in mind what is advanced.— 1 Cor. xii. 13. &c.

The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper serve to promote the ends of edification, because in them are represented the grand truths of the gospel upon which our hope depends, and by which holiness is promoted, and the great condescension of God our Saviour, familiarized to our senses. Every action in these divine institutions presents something concerning the truth, and in the use of them, disciples grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In them they follow on to know the Lord, and pass through the different stages of the christian life. Every church, therefore, should be zealous in preserving these ordinances, as they were delivered unto the churches by the apostles; for if this order be changed, the end must be frustrated. And hence we may see that those persons are injuring themselves, who keep back from a practical attendance on these

these ordinances, and not only so, but count those institutions weak and circumstantial which God, in great condescension, has ordained for edification. Let me earnestly recommend this part of my discourse to those who believe the gospel, and have peace in their souls through it, and yet keep back from the instituted church order. You complain of being weak, and is it to be wondered at, while you are neglecting the means which God has instituted for giving you strength? I may also add, that if the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of edification, can we be too often edified? And does not this remove that objection, that a frequent attention to it takes off from its dignity and importance? The more frequently the mind is exercised in the contemplation of the important truths of the gospel, and in cultivating the tempers corresponding to them, the ordinances of Christ will rise in our estimation: the mind will elevate itself in thankfulness, or be deeply abased with a sense of unworthiness. The apostles and ancient churches met every first day of the week for eating the Lord's Supper; but when the gospel order became corrupted, it was attended to but once a quarter; then once a year: this arose from priestcraft and superstition. Since that time it has been customary once a month; but where have we any command, or any example for this in the scriptures? Can we frequent the means of edification too often? Can we shew Christ's death too frequently? Can we remember Christ too often? Can we too frequently confess our faith in him, and be put in mind of his second appearance? If not, then why is not the gospel order observed among us?

And as the ministry of the word, and ordinances of the gospel, are calculated to promote edification, so also does the discipline of the

house of God, 1 Cor. v. 5.—2 Cor. x. 8. chap. xiii. 10. It was not for the destruction of the person on whom the discipline is exercised, but as a means for promoting his edification and repentance; not for destruction or injury to the body, as some would think, but for the preservation of the soul in the ways of God. Such a part of discipline is set forth, as the sign of God's dealing at the great day with an apostate from the truth; it teaches them his power in his church, and the evil and danger of sin; and though it fall short of the salutary effect it should have upon the individual, yet the body may be saved. 2 Cor. v. As the reason of this discipline, and indeed of all the ordinances and commandments, arises from the truth believed, it should be made known among the churches, as their rule and example, and should be practised in the fear of God, in obedience to his word, when the providence of God points out occasion. Thus have I endeavoured to illustrate and improve, as I went along, the first proposition which was laid down.

2. I come now to the second thing proposed, which was to shew, that where the church order is preserved, and edification promoted, it will be manifested by the disciples walking in the fear of the Lord. Such is the nature of spiritual instruction, that it not only has a suitable influence upon the heart, but carries its happy effects into the practice, and is manifested in such a manner, that others may take notice of it. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, so that without it no man can be a christian. But here let us attend to the meaning of the term *fear*. The word in our text does not intend that slavish dread, of damnation, which is common to the wicked, nor the painful fear of the Pharisee, who is labouring to establish his own righteousness

ness, and is inquiring, "What lack I yet?" This is a fear which gives much disquiet, lest we have not done enough for our salvation, and shews that the mind is altogether estranged from the gospel. The fear here spoken of, possesses the mind, even when there is a full consciousness of the sufficiency and freeness of pardoning mercy, and also of personal interest in the everlasting covenant. For this fear is a blessing of that covenant, Heb. viii. and a principal characteristic of the man of God. This fear is first produced in the heart, when faith, hope, and love are produced there, by the word and spirit of God: it arises from believing God to be such as his word represents him, and its practical tendency is to lead us to walk before him in such a manner as becomes that belief of his true character. Now as the first genuine impression of the fear of God comes through the knowledge of him, so without doubt, as we grow in the knowledge of the gospel, or in proportion to our edification in the scripture, will be our fear of God, and in proportion to that fear in our hearts, will be the evidence of it in our lives. In the fear of God is included.

First: *A fear of respect.* If we know God as our Creator, Preserver, as our King, our Father, our Friend, surely we should respect and reverence him as such. But this cannot be proved to others, nor can we have any solid evidence of it ourselves, unless it produces such a conduct towards God, as is suitable to such views of his character. When the disciples walked in the fear of the Lord, they adored him as their creator, they acknowledged and praised him as their Preserver, they obeyed him as their King, they loved him as their Father, and walked with him in all his appointed ways as their best Friend,

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shewing such a fear of him as preserved them from acting unsuitably to the impressions of his character. Another property of this fear is that,

Secondly: *It promotes the hatred of sin.* They who have this fear, know what a glorious God the Lord Jehovah is! what dreadful punishments sin deserves! how awfully it makes against the happiness of the soul! and how jealous he is of his glory and honor!—Having God before their eyes, they stand in awe of offending his laws. This fear makes us have our eyes directed to the Lord, to deliver us from the evil of our hearts, and from the wiles of the devil. When this fear dwells in the mind, it leads the subject of it to tremble at the word of God; to receive as sacred every word that God hath spoken, to fear lest he should form wrong notions of that word, or lest others should mislead him, carefully to compare one part of it with another, that he may learn its true meaning. It promotes a reverential walk in the church, in the family, and in the world, according to the directions of God's word, and leads to live by the faith of the Son of God, in whose character and work the divine perfections are so strikingly manifested. Thus we see that edification promotes the fear of God, and on the other hand, that walking in his fear, proves the truth of our spiritual edification, and thus from the whole, the falsity of that doctrine which fixes the charge of licentiousness upon the gospel of grace, is demonstrated.

Let us then cultivate and cherish this fear, and study the grounds and motives of it. It indeed wears an hostile appearance towards corrupt faith; but setting the Lord always before our eyes, let us ever remember that they do not walk in this fear, whatever they may profess who
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make light of the gospel, the ordinances and discipline of God's word.

3. I come now to the third thing proposed, which is to shew, that the comforts of the Holy Spirit are intimately connected with walking in the fear of the Lord.

By the comfort of the Holy Spirit, is not intended that peace and joy which arise in our minds on our first believing, but that joy and divine consolation, which Christ promises to his disciples united together, walking in the fear of the Lord, and bearing the hatred of the world with patience.—Christ has connected these things together; “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace. I have overcome the world.” The work of the Holy Spirit, as the comforter, is to bring to remembrance the friendly and gracious sayings of Jesus, to lead into all truth, and seal the souls of the disciples unto the day of Christ. Now, it is in the way of walking in the fear of the Lord that he does this. Some are ready to wonder how there can be the least connection between the fear of the Lord, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost; but this arises either from ignorance of the nature of gospel comfort, or their inattention to gospel obedience. To illustrate this subject, it may be observed, in a few instances, how the highest manifestations of the love of God have accompanied the deepest impressions of his fear. The case of Abraham, Gen. xxii. 12. &c. Isa. vi. Dan. x. Matt. xvii. The beloved disciple John, Rev. i. 17. and even the sufferings of the first-born among many brethren, are proofs of this. Thus we see what an intimate connection there is between the fear of God and the comforts of the gospel. When a church is using the means of edification, and walking together in the fear of the Lord, they

will most surely partake of the comfort of the Holy Spirit, who will shed abroad the love of God in their hearts. God will deal with them as his sons and daughters; he will manifest himself to be their God, and recognize them as his people. But where either a church or a private individual walks otherwise, there is no scriptural ground to expect the comfort of the Holy Spirit; for God hath said, "they that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed." The connection between these things will further appear from the ii. and iii. chapters of the book of Revelations. The nature of this comfort is a confirmation that their joy in the gospel is the true joy, or the beginning of eternal life, and thus Christians become assured that they are not deceiving themselves, but that they are Christ's disciples indeed.

4. Societies thus walking agreeably to the mind of Christ, have grounds to expect that their numbers shall be multiplied. It has been generally thought a good sign that people are edified, and that christianity flourishes, when great multitudes flock together, but more especially, when many profess themselves members of such and such churches; but there is no reason to think that edification will be promoted where the gospel in its purity is not preached, the ordinances, in their original form, administered, and the discipline of the house of God carefully preserved, because these we have seen are God's ordinary methods of edifying his people; and as we cannot call such an increase the increase of God, or that the Lord added to the church such as shall be saved, so, on the other hand, we cannot expect God to smile in gathering the people together, where the ordinances and discipline of his house are

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not zealously attended to: but on the other hand, where this is the case, it may be expected, because, in this way the Lord has blessed the churches of old, and where they did not so, he removed the candlestick out of its place, and unchurched them.

It should be observed also, that where such a people are gathered, there the hand of God appears; it is a proof that he is with them of a truth. Where, notwithstanding, the corruption which surrounds them, the gospel is purely preached, the ordinances duly administered, and without the fear of man, the discipline regarded, there his kingdom does appear; and there, according to his promise, he will come and bless his people. Such a conduct must have a native tendency to strike the attention of others, and lead them to acknowledge that God is with us of a truth. Let your light then so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your heavenly Father. The happy influence of such conduct in drawing the attention of others to the gospel, is strikingly manifested in the case of the church at Thessalonica, whose faith and exemplary conduct are so highly commended by Paul: and it is a means of promoting the interests of the gospel, which cannot be too deeply felt, or fervently enforced.

The subject which we have been considering, suggests many useful instructions for the regulation of the conduct, and which merit the deepest attention, of all the followers of Christ.

First;—How careful ought we to be to preserve the purity of the gospel, and the order and discipline of the house of God. The gospel is indeed a treasure of unspeakable value. It is a revelation of the utmost importance to man, and it is from its purity that the advantages of comfort and practical godliness are derived. The
gospel

gospel gives us just views of the character and perfections of God, and of the moral condition of man; it presents a solid foundation of hope to the guilty mind, and contains the only efficacious motives for forming a holy life. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. If our views of the gospel be perverted, we must entertain improper ideas of God, which must vitiate our religious conduct, we must be destitute of all true consolation, nor shall we feel the force of these incentives to holiness which he who best knows the heart of man has made known for its government. Consider, moreover, that the gospel is of divine authority, and that every part of it is the *testimony of God*. This renders it our duty not only to understand it well, and to receive it submissively, but to preserve its purity with fervent zeal and love.—The conduct of Paul in this respect deserves the imitation of all christians. He was firmly assured of the truth of the gospel, and his love to it is warmed into godly detestation of every sentiment, that either affects its truth, or contaminates its purity. “If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” When his mind was ripened by experience, and his sincerity tried by the severest calamities, he still holds fast the faith himself, and earnestly exhorts believers, if they would attain the everlasting kingdom, to do the same. This shews in what light christian churches ought to view attachment to a pure gospel, and teaches them, that every faithful disciple is distinguished by his love to the truth and the commandments of Jesus.—Sensible that what he has appointed has the weight of divine authority, and must be best calculated for their edification, they must ob-
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serve all things whatsoever he has commanded them.

Secondly. There cannot be any good hope or consolation enjoyed by any professor of the gospel, who does not walk in the fear of God.

The gospel, no doubt, communicates peace of mind and the hope of eternal life to all that believe it. This is essential to its nature, as a revelation of pardon to the guilty, through the death and resurrection of Christ. But faith must be productive of corresponding fruits;—it must produce a delight in the law of God, lead us to serve him with reverence and godly fear, and stimulate us to holiness of life. This is the natural influence of all the truths, which the gospel reveals, and peculiarly of the doctrine of reconciliation through the sacrifice of the Son of God. The christian's faith purifieth the heart, and works by love; the gospel hope leads to purify ourselves as Christ is pure, and fortifies the mind not only to endure suffering with resignation, but to oppose every sinful propensity. The knowledge of God's love induces the love of the brethren of Christ, and faith in his mercy produces mercy and good fruits towards them.—These principles and their effects are inseparable. And hence it is by the operation of the faith upon our hearts and conduct that our comfort in the gospel is promoted. By the work and labour of love we arrive at the full assurance of hope, and know that we have passed from death unto life. Most delusive and false must that professor's hopes be, which are accompanied by a sinful life, or not attended with a reverence for the distinguishing laws of christianity. His profession must be but a name to live, and his hope that of the hypocrite which perisheth for ever.

Thirdly. Let this subject lead the members of gospel churches to diligent self-examination.

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“Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth he shall also reap.” These are interesting questions, which every one should address to his own mind;—what effect has the gospel had upon us; has it led us to fear God? How has this been manifested? Does it appear in the life and conversation, in our families, towards the members of the body of Christ, and in a practical obedience to his commandments.

Lastly;—This subject suggests practical information to the believers of the gospel who are not united with the church of Christ. The fear of God should lead you to observe his commandments; and these cannot be obeyed while you do not walk in union with his disciples. This, too, is as essentially necessary to your own comfort, as it is to evince the sincerity of your attachment to the gospel, and your belief of its truths. While you neglect this, or continue in communion where his commandments are disregarded, you must be living in disobedience to his authority, and negligent of those proofs of love to the Redeemer, which he has expressly enjoined. Let these reflections receive the consideration which is due to them, for “blessed are they that do his commandments,” for they shall have a right to the tree of life, and shall enter in through the gates into the city, where, waiting in the perfect fear of the Lord, they shall enjoy the consolations of divine mercy in their highest measure and perfection. *Amen.*

SERMON II.

Behold his soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.—

Hab. ii. 4.

IN the present state of existence, the righteous often suffer calamity, while the wicked rejoice in prosperity. To account for this seeming inequality of the divine procedure in the government of this world, has always baffled the wisdom of the wise, and frequently perplexed the servants of God. One thing we may be assured of, that however unable we may be to comprehend the ways of God, still they are directed by unspotted justice and unerring wisdom, and that none have any cause for complaint or discontent. To wait with patience, and to acquiesce with submission, is the duty of all.

This temper of mind is strongly inculcated in the preceding discourse of this Prophet. He had been contemplating the prosperity of the wicked, and saw their violence, injustice, and oppression fully established. While he adores the unchangeable purity of God, he asks, why Jehovah held his “peace when the wicked devoured the man, who was more righteous than he,” chap. i. 12. 13. The beginning of the second chapter represents him “watching to see what God would say to him,” what information he should receive for satisfying the inquiries of his people. He receives the answers of God, commanding him to “write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” He is informed, that the time for unveiling

veiling these dispensations was yet distant, but that the event to which the vision refers was fully determined, so as not to be averted by man nor by distance of time. Hence the prophet is directed to wait for its accomplishment, in the full confidence of God's will being unchangeable, and only to be known from future events, which his providence directs and over-rules. Such was the answer of Jehovah. If any, in the pride of discontent, should arraign his wisdom or justice, "the soul of such is not upright within him," but the just believing that the Lord spoke by his prophet, waited in faith to see the end.

Such is the literal signification of the passage, which has an evident reference to the deliverance of Israel from Babylon, and the destruction of their enemies. The apostle Paul, however, quotes these words three times, and evidently applies them to two opposite descriptions of professors of the gospel. Under the direction of the apostle, therefore, I shall draw your attention to the spiritual improvement, which they are suited to convey.

First. I shall consider, in its nature, causes and effects, that frame of mind which is expressed in the text by *the soul's being lifted up*.

Secondly. I shall shew that that frame of mind stands opposed to the christian character, and that it is, in fact, an awful evidence of a corrupt and wicked heart. *His soul is not upright within him.*

Thirdly. I shall delineate the opposite character mentioned in the text, and shew how the principles of the just are calculated to destroy every degree of self-confidence.

1. The language of the text, like that of prophecy in general, is poetical and figurative. By the soul being lifted up, may be understood *a self-confident spirit*. Nothing, indeed, can be
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more expressive of that disposition of mind, by which we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. This is a depravity too common to man in his fallen state, and arises from ignorance of God and enmity against his will.

The judgment which we should form of ourselves, will be best learnt by considering the character of God, and the law which he has given us. From these we may ascertain the character of man, and be convinced, that sentiments directly opposite to self-confidence, ought to reign in the human mind.

God is a being of infinite holiness, justice, goodness, mercy, and truth. He possesses every moral perfection in the highest degree. He views with holy detestation every thing inconsistent with his all-perfect character. "Before him evil cannot dwell, nor sinners stand in his sight."—In the striking language of the prophet, "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." As the great Governor of the world he has given us a law, which bears the image of his moral perfections, and which, in its nature, "is holy, just, and good." All God's rational creatures are under its authority, from their relation to him as their Creator, and as the subjects of his moral government. Men ought to judge of their righteousness only in proportion to their conformity to its righteous requirements. It enjoins us "to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves." The smallest deviation from this even in thought it condemns as moral impurity. Such is the absolute perfection it requires, that its voice is, "Be ye holy, even as God is holy."—If therefore, we think better of ourselves, than we really appear in the sight of this only rule of righteousness,

ness, we must be thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.—“Our souls are lifted up within us.” Such a spirit, however disguised, and however flattering to the nature of man, can proceed from no other cause, than ignorance of the purity of God and of his holy law, particularly as this is manifested in the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin. It is, notwithstanding its inconsistency with our present state, the governing spirit of man. It is discernible in every situation of life, from the highest to the lowest of mankind, and discovers itself in nothing more strikingly than in our religious intercourse with our Creator. It is highly necessary, therefore, to speak more particularly of this reigning pernicious spirit as it manifests itself in the *religious world*, or among those who have, or intend to have a serious turn for a religious life.

Some are of opinion, that there is no occasion to confine themselves to religion at present, because they imagine, that they can break off from their sinful pleasures when they please, and that whenever they do, God is bound to receive them into his favour. Every person of this sentiment thinks more highly than he ought; because he thinks his heart better than it is, and that it is as inclinable to holiness as to sin. He imagines his vicious propensities and whole course of wicked life can be altered at his pleasure. How awfully mistaken! The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and experience proves his fatal mistake.—His mind is so devoted to sin, that though he can prevail with himself to abandon some wicked courses, he does not, cannot love God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. And although we should repent and do the will of God, what but the spirit of self-confidence in the virtue

tue of his own works could delude him into the supposition, that the All pure Jehovah is bound to accept him as a righteous character? Having forfeited the divine favour by sin, he can have no claim on the Most High. God is surely under no obligation to receive into his friendship the persevering violaters of his law, who have stifled the voice of their consciences, and who, while they acknowledge it to be in their power to lead a holy and virtuous life, had no pleasure but in iniquity. Every sin deserves hell as soon as it is committed;—and saith the scriptures, *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.*

But this spirit is often equally evident in the sinner that is awakened. He goes about by his tears, his prayers, his repentance and devotional duties, to establish his own righteousness. In contemplating these, he fancies his hopes of heaven secure, and his soul is lifted up within him. It is very common for men to be more elated with pride from this quarter than the former:—and thousands are to be met with who build their hopes of eternal happiness upon this foundation. Their religious ardour blinds their understandings, and obliterates the impressions of former crimes. Nay, even the contrast of their former conduct with their present zeal and seeming devotion, swells them with self-conceit, and hardens their hearts against the voice of truth. But these self-elating thoughts are not only pernicious in themselves, but they are highly immoral. Every sentiment must be so, that subverts the standard of morality, the law of God; and that teaches us to extenuate our guilt in not loving the Lord with all our heart and mind, or makes the tears of a sinner, or the agonies of the self-condemned set aside the curse of the Almighty. If righteousness comes by

these means, the gospel of Christ is an unnecessary revelation ; if human efforts be sufficient, then the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ are all in vain.

But the spirit of self-confidence is still more fully displayed by many, who explode the schemes which we have mentioned, and who adopt one apparently more agreeable to truth, but more pernicious in its consequences. The scheme to which I refer is the conclusion, that we are the elect of God, the children of his love, and the favourites of the Most High upon unscriptural grounds. Mr. Hervey gives his opinion of this source of a self-righteous spirit in these words, " Now this self-dependence may be ranked among the most dangerous of infernal politics, because the fatal poison lies deep, and too often undiscerned." Such persons are lifted up with conceit of their own discoveries, experience, and attainments. Like the Pharisees of old, they have a full persuasion of their interest in the kingdom of God, and upon the same grounds, the difference betwixt themselves and others. They speak much, indeed, of their own vileness,—which carries in it a shew of voluntary humility, but they expect their humility to be extolled. Should they be charged with any particular sin, or told the bitter truth, that they are in no respect better than others, they soon discover *what manner of spirit they are of*. They talk about the glories of the gospel, about their interest in covenant mercies, about the special work of the Spirit upon their hearts, about heaven and its glories ; and their souls are elated while these thoughts prevail, because they imagine that all these are theirs. But unless they perceive their own interest in them, they see no beauty in the Saviour, nor derive any comfort from the gospel. All this, however, arises from
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nothing but the spirit of self-dependence. To persons of the same principles Christ addressed these awful words, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" The Pharisees, like these professors, were strict in external duties, practised mortification, had a great zeal in the profession of religion, and believed with the fullest assurance that God loved them, and that they should be partakers of endless happiness, but they hated the Son of God, and the truths he proclaimed. Our Lord told them that this decided the falsehood of their hopes, for "If ye were of God, ye would love me."—"He that is of God, heareth my words." The same text decides the character of all similar pretenders, of whom we are speaking. The truth, that they must enter the kingdom of God upon the very same footing as the publican and harlot, that the ungodly are justified in simply crediting the gospel testimony concerning the Son of God, that his atonement, without a thought or work on the part of the sinner, is sufficient to present the most guilty perfect and spotless before God, is a truth, which provokes their warmest hatred. It ever awakens their detestation, and excites the virulence of their language in every term of obloquy and scorn. Yet a most undoubted truth it remains, and it is by love to this truth, and delight in it, that the genuine Christian is distinguished in the scriptures.

• Again, we may reject all the former plans, and have exceedingly clear and just views of the gospel, and yet be under the influence of the temper condemned in the text. How strikingly is this manifested by many, who nice and critical in their taste about doctrines, delighted in making discoveries in divine things, and ready to censure every other system but their own,

shew that the tone of their minds is too elevated for humble Christians, and that the gospel, which tends to produce a lowly spirit, has not humbled them. With such the gospel is more an object of judgment, than of affection; of criticism and speculation, than of the reformation of the temper. Such are under the government of the same confidence, which is condemned in the church of Laodicea, and ought ever to be reminded of the striking language of our Saviour to its members. "Ye are poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked."

In many other ways does the spirit of self-dependence operate. It is natural to the depraved mind of man. Its operation is powerful even in the believers of the gospel. Against no disposition have they more need to be continually on their guard, for none is more opposed to genuine christianity.

This leads to the Second thing proposed, which was to shew that self-confidence stands in direct opposition to the christian character, and is an awful evidence of a heart not upright within us.

All conceit of ourselves is contradictory to the truths of the gospel, and the spirit it recommends. The very foundation of christianity pre-supposes this awful truth, that the whole world is guilty before God, and there is no possible way to escape everlasting punishment, but through the plan of salvation, which infinite and eternal wisdom contrived, and which the incarnate Redeemer fulfilled in his sufferings unto death. Christianity is founded upon the confession, that the holy law of God is glorious, and deserving the supreme regard of all his rational creatures, and that Jehovah's conduct in revealing his wrath from heaven against all sin, is, like himself, just and glorious. Besides the gospel teaches

teaches us, that God will not accept of us as his people, on account of any actings of our bodies or minds, and that we have no reason to conclude, that we are his favorites, unless from our receiving his testimony, and continuing in his faith and commandments to the end.

Hence the temper most essential to the christian character, is genuine humility, because, most consonant to the design of the gospel.—Every christian sees his own character infinitely odious in the sight of God and of his law.—Numberless defects he will perceive in the duties which he performs, and in the motives of his actions. Deeply convinced, that in many things he offends the divine commandments, he will adopt the language of the Psalmist, *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, who, O Lord, could stand?* He has no idea of comparing himself with any other rule than God's holy law, which requires perfect love to God and to man. He must consider God as holy and just in not accepting his services, and viewing himself as justly obnoxious to the everlasting wrath of Omnipotence, he must acknowledge the equity of the divine sentence in the threatenings of his law:—In a word, he must consider himself in no other light than a hell deserving sinner. In thinking thus of himself, he thinks soberly, even as he ought to think. But the temper condemned in the text is the very reverse of all this:—It is purely an antinomian spirit, because it is subversive of the purity and immutability of the divine law. It is the spirit of pride, elevating the soul to entertain high conceit of its emotions and feelings, and is directly repugnant to the character of God, *who resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

Self denial is also essential to the christian character. Without it we cannot be Chris
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disciples. *If any would be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* By self denial we are to understand, not only the denial of every vicious propensity, but also the giving up of that false opinion which we form of our own characters;—the denying of our own righteousness, wisdom, strength and excellency. Like humility, it is founded in a conviction of our sinfulness, and is excited to action from the permanency of such an impression. It requires but little reflection to see, how opposite all self confidence is to this important part of the christian temper. It exalts our own righteousness and wisdom, while self denial abases them;—it sacrifices every thing at the shrine of pride; self denial presents its offerings, with a contrite heart, at the foot of divine mercy. Must not then that man's mind be highly depraved, his soul not upright within him, who is under its governing influence? Every thought of his heart, all his views of himself and divine things are in direct contradiction to the will of God, and to the sentiments which he has inculcated upon his creatures by his Providence and his word. Every word which a sinner says in his own justification, is a wicked condemnation of God's law, and every doctrine, by whatever name it may be called, that gives comfort to sinners, while thus thinking highly of themselves, confirms this pernicious spirit, which strengthens man's opposition to both the law and the gospel.

I proceed now, Thirdly, to delineate the opposite character; and to shew how his principles are calculated to sap the foundation of self-confidence.

But where shall we find such a character? A just man, in the proper sense of the word, is not to be found in this state of imperfection. "All have sinned;" all are condemned as unjust in the

the sight of the divine law. Nay, saith the scripture, "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."

Sinners are made righteous in the sight of God, through the atonement of the Son of God. He was sent, agreeably to the gracious design of infinite mercy, to make reconciliation for the sins of his people, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness. For this purpose he assumed human nature, and bore the punishment of his people's sins in his own body on the tree, in the character of their substitute and representative. In their name he endured the wrath of God due to their sins, and offered up himself as a pure and all-sufficient sacrifice of "a sweet smelling savor" to the Most High. With this Jehovah hath declared himself well pleased, by raising his Son from the dead; hereby manifesting his delight in him, and his full acceptance of his sacrifice. This being effected in their stead, the blessings of pardon, peace with God, and eternal life, which the death of Christ has secured, are graciously conferred on sinners, who believe the gospel. Thus it is that sinners are made just before God,—“justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” This doctrine is strikingly set before us by Paul to the Corinthians, and is there pointed out to be the sum of the gospel. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them—For he hath made him to be made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Cor. v. 19. 21. “By the disobedience of one, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, many were made righteous.”—This all-perfect righteousness is conveyed to men in the testimony of God concerning it; and when this testimony is known and believed,

believed by the guilty sinner, he is accepted as righteous in the Beloved, and "being justified by grace, he becomes an heir according to the hope of eternal life." This view of the ground of his acceptance is always calculated to preserve him from self-righteous boasting, to fill the mind with humility, and to lead him to "glory only in the Lord as his righteousness and strength."

The truth and reality of his acceptance before God is manifested by his works. This is what is meant by the apostle James, when he teaches, that a man is justified by works. Thus we are told of Abraham, the father of the faithful, that "he was justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar: that faith wrought with his works, and by works his faith was made perfect." Jam. ii. 21. 22. This does not refer to justification before God, but to justification in the sight of man, and to our own consciences, by doing justly, walking uprightly, and carefully keeping the commandments of God. And assuredly without obedience to his will revealed in the scriptures, our faith must appear dead, even "as a body without a spirit." The grace of God, which brings salvation, and freely justifies the sinner, "teaches him that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope of Christ's second and glorious appearing."

What are we to understand by the *faith* of the just? Many have been the definitions of faith, which men have given us, and often highly perplexing to the serious mind. These let us leave to the darkness whence they originate, and simply enquire what the scriptures teach us on this head. Here we learn, that the term

Faith

Faith is used in two senses, first, for *the belief of the truth*, and, secondly, for *the truth believed*.

By the TRUTH, I understand that doctrine which it is the grand design of the gospel to make known to men, and which the apostles call *the truth* by way of eminence. This is no other than the testimony of God, that there is forgiveness to the chief of sinners through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. This was the doctrine which the apostles proclaimed as the sum of the gospel, which contains the brightest display of the divine character, and gives importance and truth to the law and the prophets. Now faith is nothing more nor less than the *belief of this truth*. The gospel is the *report* of God concerning the Person, work, and salvation of his Son:—faith is the belief of this report as true. The gospel is the *testimony* or *witness* of Jehovah concerning Jesus the Messiah;—faith is receiving this testimony, or crediting it as the truth of God. Saving faith, from the words of our Lord to Peter, is this, “We believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”—All who believe this, as the gospel teaches, are blessed of God, and possess the *same precious faith* as the apostles.

The other sense of the term *faith* is *the truth believed*, or the gospel revelation. The apostle uses it in this acceptation, when he says, “that he preached *the faith* which he had once destroyed:” and it must also be thus understood, when Christians are enjoined “to contend earnestly *for the faith* once delivered to the saints,” and when some are spoken of “as denying *the faith*.”

In whichever of these senses we understand the word faith, in the passage it amounts to much the same thing: and both views serve to illustrate

illustrate the spirit and temper of the christian, and to distinguish him from the self-righteous Pharisee, whose happiness arises from his feelings and unwarrantable confidence, and not from the testimony and promise of the Most High.

The just shall live by faith, that is, they live in the firm belief that the gospel is the truth of God. It is very evident that the apostle to the Hebrews quotes these words in this sense, from his contrasting the character of the just with that of the backslider from the truth. "Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." He points out the *just* as those, "who believe to the saving of the soul," or who are "faithful unto death, and obtain a crown of life." When a sinner is brought to believe the gospel at first, it is in virtue of divine agency. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into his heart, giving him the light of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ." His mind is convinced by the character, the doctrine, and the resurrection of Christ, and the suitableness of the gospel to his fallen state, that the *good news* of salvation through a crucified Saviour are divinely true, and he sets to his seal, that God is true in the testimony given to his son. This discovery of infinite mercy deeply engages his heart, and appears to him "the one thing needful." It takes possession of his understanding, as making known the most important of all knowledge, and of his affection, as interesting to his present and his eternal happiness, and it subdues the enmity of his heart, by discovering to him the love and good pleasure of God in the work of his Son. Many temptations from various sources assail his mind, tending to lessen his attachment to
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the gospel, and to subvert his faith in its truth. But the true christian holds fast "the beginning of his confidence, and the rejoicing of his hope, firm unto the end." He sees, that every thing that leads away the mind from the gospel, is derogatory to the honor of the divine perfections, to the purity of the divine law, or flattering to the depravity of the human heart, as well as destructive of every solid hope; and, therefore, he "fights the good fight of faith, that he may lay hold on eternal life." Think not this, brethren, a matter of small moment. 'Tis by this that the genuine christian is distinguished from every false professor, whose attachment to the gospel is not founded in solid conviction of its truth, or has been inferior to their love of the world. It is by "patient continuance in well-doing that we are to seek for glory, honor, and immortality, and it is only by faith and patience that any man can inherit the promises."

The just derive all their peace and happiness from the truths which they believe concerning the death and resurrection of Christ. The apostle to the Romans, declares the gospel of Christ to be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;—for therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed, to faith." It makes known an all-sufficient way of salvation, which will terminate in the everlasting happiness of all who believe it; for it makes known to the faith and credit of men, God's righteous method of justifying the ungodly, who believe in Christ. The apostle quotes these words of the Prophet, "the just shall live by faith," as a confirmation of the truth which he had expressed respecting the all-sufficiency of the gospel method of salvation:—and his application of it certainly teaches us, that it is from the gospel, as the grand revelation of mercy and forgive-

ness, that our peace and hopes must be derived. No sinner can receive true peace to his mind from any other quarter. The law is to him the ministration of condemnation and death:—for it pronounces the curse of God upon every soul of man that doeth evil.—Therefore, “by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” While the guilty sinner is in this unhappy state, the gospel presents an all-sufficient ground of hope in the finished work of the Son of God. He is brought to see that this is fully answerable to his guilty and miserable state, and that it is commensurate to all the demands of the law and justice against him.—“Being justified by faith, he enjoys peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoices in the hope of the glory of God.” A believer must never lose sight of the truth which first gave him confidence before God.—Deeply convinced of his manifold sins, and of the imperfections of all his religious duties, he must continue to draw all his consolation and hope from the atonement of Christ, in which God is for ever well pleased. Hence we find the apostle Paul thus expressing his sentiments,—“God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Renouncing his own righteousness, and every thing estimable in the view of men, as a ground of hope, he says, “What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Such was the source of hope to a christian, who had been highly exemplary in his life,
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who had enjoyed a high sense of the divine favor, had lived in communion with God, and was now soon to finish his course. His comfort and hope still arise from that gospel, in which "Christ is made of God to sinners, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." As there is but *one hope*, let none imagine, that the believer, who has lived obedient to the faith, can have any other ground of hope, than the most guilty sinner. For Paul in the prospect of appearing before God, declares that all his confidence arose from his knowledge of the character of Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Thus ought the christian to live by the truth he believes.— And as the gospel reveals his own vileness, as it contains the brightest discoveries of the grace and love of God, as it teaches him that his hope must be founded upon the obedience of Christ, and makes known what he hath done for the redemption of sinners, when a christian lives by the truth believed, his mind will be transformed into its likeness: he will be clothed with humility, he will honor the divine law; gratitude and love to God, will be united with distrust in himself, and an impressive sense of divine forgiveness. Thus the principles by which he lives, while they are subversive of false hopes, are equally destructive to that self-confidence which reigns in the heart of the Pharisee, and which arises from improper views of God and of himself.

The just live by faith, as they are firmly persuaded of the truth of the promises, and live in the belief of the certainty of their fulfilment as to future blessings.

The apostle, in quoting these words in the epistle to the Hebrews, has a manifest reference

to this. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith." Many of the promises of the gospel are fulfilled to the believer in this present life, in the peace and abundant consolation which he enjoys through the Holy Spirit, in the sanctification of his soul, and the hope of immortality. But the greater part of them relate to future blessings, to the happiness of the soul after death, the coming of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and the endless state of glory and felicity in the kingdom of the Father. Christians are described in the New Testament as living in the firm belief that these shall be accomplished at God's appointed time. The hopes, which these promises inspire, are their great support in this state of trial and suffering, as well as the most powerful motive to watchfulness, humility, and purity of life. These future events, so interesting to the christian, are discredited by the unbeliever, they are kept out of view by the carnal hypocrite, and the temper suitable to them, makes no part of the religious experience of the Pharisee. But it is essential to the character of the christian, to be "looking not at those things which are seen and temporal, but at those things which are not seen and eternal." "They wait for the manifestation of the Sons of God," and having their hope laid up in heaven, to be fully enjoyed at the coming of the Son of Man, "they have their affections set upon those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at God's right hand." A firm belief in these unseen realities, must have a powerful influence to lead to holiness in all manner of conversation, and also to destroy a self-righteous spirit. What man, who knows the character of God, the purity of the divine law, and his own numberless transgressions, can contemplate the prospect

prospect of future judgment, relying on the merit of his works, and going about to establish his own righteousness as the ground of his acceptance? Such a temper is inconsistent with the christian's hopes and exercise in the view of future bliss. He knows that a happy death is the fruit of the Redeemer's victory over sin, which is the sting of death, and that eternal life is the unmerited gift of divine grace through the righteousness of the Saviour. He cannot, therefore, look forward to death and judgment, but the ground of his acceptance must meet his view, and without reflecting upon his own vileness and unworthiness in the sight of God. A self-confident temper is utterly subversive of that watchfulness, patient hope, and devout resignation which the gospel so strongly inculcates. It divests the mind of that godly fear and holy jealousy of ourselves, which is the very parent of watchfulness: and by elating the soul with spiritual pride, effectually subverts every motive to patience and submission. How opposite also to the exercises of the ransomed of Lord! In them the most profound humility, and the deepest sense of their own unworthiness, are united with love to the Redeemer, and glory to God in the highest. Their hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb, teach us, that an interest in salvation excludes all boasting on the part of the just, and leads to glory in the worthiness of the Lamb alone. Well are they described as saying:—

There would I vie with all the host,
In duty and in bliss,
While less than nothing I can boast,
And vanity confess.

The more thy glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie;
Thus while I sink my joys shall rise
Unmeasurably high.

Let the truths now set before each of you, serve to guard you against a self-righteous spirit. Your own conscience must accuse you, that it has too great influence upon your mind. But you ought to be ever watchful against its prevalence. "The lofty looks of man should be humbled, the haughtiness of man bowed down, and the Lord alone exalted." "Be ye clothed with humility." Study the perfections of God revealed in the gospel, attend to the purity of his law, and grow in the knowledge of the grace of Christ. This will prevent you from talking highly of your piety, your humility, your experience, your discoveries, or attainments. It will lead to think justly of yourselves, and to glorify God in your body and spirit. Live by the faith of the Son of God, and carefully attend to all those ordinances which are given you to promote this life: and soon shall ye receive the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Then shall your faith be turned into vision, and your hope into full fruition; "for you shall see him as he is, and be made like him." *Amen.*

Awake our souls, (away our fears,
Let ev'ry trembling thought be gone,)
Awake and run the heav'nly race,
And put a cheerful courage on.

True, 'tis a strait and thorny road,
And mortal spirits tire and faint;
But they forget the mighty God
'That feeds the strength of ev'ry saint.

From thee, the overflowing spring,
Our souls shall drink a fresh supply,
While such as trust their native strength,
Shall melt away, and droop and die.

SERMON III.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you—Matt. vi. 33.

THE preaching of the kingdom of heaven, and the things pertaining to it, being a declaration of war against those all-powerful and subtle adversaries, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, it is not at all to be wondered at, that “not many mighty, not many noble are called.” But as the lusts adverted to are odious to God, prejudicial to society, and hurtful to every man’s own soul, every real lover of men will stedfastly oppose these formidable enemies, and enforce subjection to that kingdom which is not of this world, at the risk of incurring the displeasure, opposition, and malice of worldly professors. And as this cannot be better done than by setting forth that immortality which is brought to light by the gospel, and the superior blessedness of attaining to the resurrection of the just, in opposition to gratifying our worldly lusts, I shall, in a dependence upon God, and with a view to what has been mentioned, attempt to discourse to you upon the genuine import of the words now read. In doing which, regard may be had, *First*, to the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; *Secondly*, to that direction which our Lord gives his disciples, in opposition to the heathenish practice mentioned in the preceding verse; and *Thirdly*, to the promise made to those who seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

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1. The kingdom of God, in the scripture account of it, hath four significations, all dependent upon each other. Sometimes it is put for that general assembly and church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven, enrolled among the blessed. Since Jesus ascended on high, he has reigned on the throne of his Majesty, angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject to him; there angels and spirits of just men made perfect, behold the King in his beauty; or as Christ himself expresses it in his prayer, "Behold his glory." These happy spirits enjoy a perfect freedom from all evil, deliverance from the curse of the law, the lusts of corrupt nature, with all its attendant miseries, and are blessed in the enjoyment of the uninterrupted favor of God. God has told us how they arrived at this blessedness, from this present evil world; "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne." Which leads me to observe, further, that,

The kingdom of heaven, or of God, on this account, frequently signifies the preaching of the word, or the making known the blessedness of the other world; and shewing how any obtain that unspeakable bliss.

Again: The kingdom of God, or of heaven, sometimes intends the gospel becoming the power of God to our salvation; causing us to receive it, not as the word of man, but as the word of the living God, which effectually worketh in them that believe. Hence the apostle describes it as consisting of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Rom. xiv. 17. 1 Cor. iv. 20.

Lastly; The gospel church state, or the union of believers in the profession of the saving truth, is denoted by the Kingdom of Heaven. This is
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its most common signification; an import, indeed, which is expressive of all the three. It is the power of God in his word that subjects any people to the christian order. The open profession of the faith, is the outward sign of a person's belonging to the kingdom of God, and every distinct assembly of believers, united in the faith and order of the gospel, is a visible representation of the eternal kingdom, in that city or town in which they dwell. In this kingdom, or in the church the gospel is preached, the truth experienced, and the hope of the eternal inheritance maintained. And since those who possess this hope, deny themselves to the life which is, and are patiently waiting for the life to come, all their concerns are, or should be, regulated by the principles of this heavenly kingdom.

Let us now turn our attention to the *righteousness* spoken of in our text, and this respects two things, dependent, indeed, upon each other; First, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which all the seed of Israel are justified, and in which they glory. This righteousness is the obedience of the Son of God unto death, which is a perfect fulfilment of that law which requires godliness and humanity, or love to God, and love to man in perfection. This law the Saviour had in his heart; and, in his obedience he magnified and made it honorable; declaring it finished when he died, and which is warranted approved, and accepted of God in his resurrection from the dead. It is by this righteousness alone that any have a title to the heavenly kingdom and eternal life. This righteousness is conveyed in the gospel testimony to every one that believes. Without the knowledge of this, giving us hope before God, maintaining peace, and giving us a sense of the divine favor, which always accompanies it as its reward, all our pretensions

tensions to righteousness, in any other sense, are vain and delusive. And it is equally so to fancy we are made just by virtue of it, in the sight of God, when we have no enjoyment of it in our own consciences, giving us ease and rest under that wrath which the law worketh. But,

Secondly: There are the fruits of this righteousness, or the genuine effects of the knowledge of it. These, indeed, are nothing more than an imitation of it; for every one who loves the saving truth, is influenced by it, agreeably to its nature. This must ever be maintained; this the gospel calls for as fruits meet for repentance, and without this conformity to the righteousness of Christ, which John calls "*a doing righteousness*" ourselves, our profession is of no avail, and our experience nothing better than a miserable delusion—the form, without the power of godliness. Hence our Lord says, in this very chapter, "unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is by the appearance of the fruits of righteousness that our Lord would have his disciples, in all ages, judge of the reality of any one's pretensions to relationship with him; "By their fruits ye shall know them." But it will be necessary to be more particular on this part of our subject.

First: Righteousness consists in the important duty of alms-giving, or, in imitation of the divine goodness to us, in doing good to all men as we have opportunity, but especially to the household of faith. This is what is frequently meant in the scriptures by righteousness; giving our bread to the hungry, our money to the needy, and our clothing to the naked, and is called a making ourselves rich towards God, or a lending to him who has promised to pay us again;

again;—and, as we should do this according as we have opportunity and ability to all men, so especially to the household of faith, who, because of their profession, are exposed to the loss of worldly enjoyments; and, because, that though God has shewn compassion to the world, and is daily doing good to his enemies, in his providence, yet hath he more particularly shewn his goodness to those who believe on his Son. And if we be disposed to this kind of righteousness, this imitation of the divine bounty, we may as readily find where to lay out our substance as those who put their money out to usury, expecting to receive again.

Secondly: This kind of righteousness, belonging to the kingdom of heaven, stands opposed to covetousness, or to laying up in store what is beyond providing things honest in the sight of all men. This may receive illustration from Luke xii.—16. 34. “Jesus spake a parable unto them, saying, the ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, this will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And he said unto his disciples, therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is *more* than raiment. Consider the ravens:

for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them; how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven? how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith? And seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Here is a case stated and considered by the Sovereign of this heavenly kingdom, and it is left upon record for our admonition. It teaches us, that covetousness does not consist merely in desiring and pursuing after riches by unjust means, but also in laying up treasure for ourselves of worldly goods, and considering them as a source of happiness: and that the true use of riches is to do good and communicate.

2. I come now to the next part of the subject, which is, to consider, Secondly, The exhortation which our Lord gives his disciples, to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

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The men of this world take every method that human wisdom and policy suggest, to obtain that kingdom from which man, by transgression, fell; to attain to some real or imaginary possession of an earthly kingdom;—for all that the kingdoms of this world can propose, is the possession of those things only which will gratify the lust of the flesh, or feast the lust of the eye, or pamper the pride of life. Hence we may see that the kingdom of heaven is different in its nature, and quite the reverse of the kingdoms of this world, in its maxims, ways, and government; so that what may be reckoned prudent, wise, and commendable in the one, is condemned as folly and madness in the other. It requires no very extensive knowledge of men and things to know what is the principal pursuit of all mankind; as animals we must have somewhat to subsist on, and it is right that every one should provide for himself and his own family, things honest in the sight of all men. But alas, we are not content with having food and raiment, though many are destitute of them. Still many are seeking to lay up for themselves treasures upon earth, while others are spending what they have more than food and raiment, in the gratification of some lust, either of the flesh, or the eye, or the pride of life: and this is called in the scripture, *sowing to the flesh*, and making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Thus some are bestowing all they have on their lusts, and others, from the fear of future evils, or from a desire to be rich in this world, are laying up treasures upon the earth. If we consider the conduct of him, who is making provision for his lusts, we may observe that the objects of sense so much engross his attention, that he has no time to bestow in seeking the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof; such a one is a heathen.

Mark the worldly professor also, who is deeply engaged in seeking what he shall eat, or what he shall drink, or making haste to get rich, that he may lay up in store treasures upon the earth; because his doubtful mind fears he shall need them; he is far from seeking first the kingdom of God. Perhaps, to maintain his credit among his fellow-professors, he may make some shew of religion; but though the disciples of Jesus meet together for a few hours, to put one another in mind of the things of eternal life, though in the six days he has one hundred and forty-four hours to seek the things of this world, the wordling cannot spare two hours out of them, or considers this as a sacrifice, and yet he is ready to imagine he is seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

The exhortation in our text is quite the reverse of this, "but seek ye first," &c. It may be objected, Is it not lawful to provide these things? Is it wrong to be diligent in business, to enlarge our business? And so on. I answer, christians are exhorted to provide for their own, to provide things honest in the sight of all men; yea, they are commanded to study to do their own business; to work with their hands, that they may walk honestly, and have lack of nothing; therefore to take care to do these things, cannot be wrong, but highly commendable. The gospel does not encourage busy bodies, nor sloth and indolence, yet are we commanded to seek *first* the kingdom of God; which evidently means that it should be the first and principle object of our pursuit.

The word *seek* is to be taken in the same sense, as when it is applied to signify the making a search or inquiry; to make any thing the object of pursuit. And to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, must be to enquire
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and search after a further knowledge of its nature and possession of its blessings, or to make the affairs of the heavenly kingdom the chief object of our pursuit, in opposition to what the nations of the world are seeking after. In whatever sense we understand the kingdom of heaven, we should seek it *first*. Does it mean the eternal state of things? To realize these things; to search after the evidence of immortality, and to form our manners agreeably to this state, should be the chief object of our pursuit.

Again: Does the kingdom of heaven intend the preaching of the word, or the gospel dispensation? Still the exhortation is suitable and applicable. It teaches us highly to value the gospel of salvation, to search the scriptures as the word of eternal life, to hold fast this faithful word in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and to strive in prayer for its advancement in the world, "that it may have free course, and be glorified in bringing sinners out of darkness into God's marvellous light."

Further: Does the kingdom of God intend the kingdom within the soul? The exhortation applies with peculiar force to this also, and teaches us, that we ought to regard it as the most important of all pursuits, to cultivate "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." These heavenly tempers are essential to the christian character. Without these, indeed, no man can be a subject of the kingdom of heaven, nor prepared to enjoy their final happiness. It was the grand design of Jehovah in the mission of his Son, that his moral image might be restored in the minds of his fallen creatures, and that "they should serve him in righteousness and holiness all the days of their lives." That this end may be fulfilled in us, should be our great pursuit, and we ought zeal-

lously to employ every means for attaining it, by fervent prayer to God for the sanctifying influence of his Holy Spirit, by meditation upon his word, and impartial self-examination.

Or lastly: Do we refer it to the church militant? The command in the text teaches us, highly to value the interests of Zion, and of "all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." The churches of the saints, consisting of the professed believers of the gospel, are the institution of Christ for the important purpose of edifying his people in the knowledge and love of the truth. Every genuine christian ought to seek their happiness as "his chief joy," and make their lasting good his study. How strikingly was this manifested in the spirit and conduct of the Apostle Paul, and above all, in the Author and Finisher of our faith. With such examples before them, christians should "love one another with pure hearts fervently:" and this should be displayed, "not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth," in the "work and labour of love" towards the poor, and in the self-denied obedience enjoined upon his disciples in feeding the hungry, visiting the distressed, and shewing mercy to the afflicted.

The world will ridicule this as foolish, and even the disciple of Christ must deny himself to obey the exhortation in the text. He must remember, that the duties of christianity are directly opposed to the prevailing maxims of the world, and the dictates of the human heart:—and if he would please God, and be accepted by him at last, he must fear God, and prefer his will to every consideration. But it should ever be remembered by us, that those things are of infinitely greater concern than what worldly people are seeking after. The doctrine of this kingdom is *the one thing needful*, so that were a
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man to gain the whole world yet be destitute of an interest in the kingdom of God, he is miserable. Consider also, that it is only in this kingdom that true happiness is to be enjoyed. The pleasures of sin are but for a season ;—they can give no happiness to the soul, for “ the end of these things is death,” while “ for these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.” Blessed, therefore, are those only, who are seeking first the kingdom of God.—Such only enjoy the divine favor, peace with the Almighty, and the well-founded hope of a blessed immortality.

Seeing then that it is the command of Christ to *seek first* the kingdom of God, and that it is fit in the nature of things that we should do so, indifference concerning it, and opposition to its interests must be highly criminal in the sight of God, and inconsistent with our real happiness. Depraved also must that disposition be, which leads us to seek our happiness in the things of this world, and to pursue them as our chief good. Christians, as those who are “ risen with Christ,” ought to “ seek those things which are above, to have their conversation in heaven, whence they look for the Saviour ;”—and while they are diligent in business, they ought to be careful about nothing, but in every state to cultivate contentment, and by prayers and supplication to make their requests known unto God.

Again, with regard to the *righteousness* of this kingdom ;—if we refer it to the everlasting righteousness of the Saviour, we are taught, that as an interest in this is the most important of all blessings, so we should “ count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.” The conduct of the apostle Paul serves to illustrate and exemplify the precept of our Saviour.

Saviour before us. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which reveals this righteousness to men; on the contrary, both as an apostle and private christian "he determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified—he gloried in nothing but the cross of Christ." It was his chief desire to be found in Christ at last, "not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that, which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness, which is of God by faith." Let "as many as would be perfect, be thus minded." Convinced, that all your own righteousness is but as filthy rags, and that this is every way perfect and glorious in the sight of God, you ought to make it all your salvation, "and all your desire," making mention of this righteousness and this only, as the ground of your hope, and source of your joy. Or, do we consider the exhortation as respecting our imitation of the Saviour's righteousness?—In this view the exhortation teaches us, that as the perfection of his lay in love to God and man in the highest degree, so the observance of these duties ought to be our leading study. Upon them "hang all the law and the prophets." Christ's righteousness, also, teaches to cultivate meekness and lowliness of heart, to love the divine character, and to abhor all sin. By exhibiting the love of God in the highest lustre, it teaches us to abound in love to his people, by ministering to the saints from a sense of his grace towards us; to be patient under unjust sufferings from men, to rely upon the divine promise in the midst of every affliction, and to run with patience and hope the race set before us.

I come now to consider—3. The promise made to those who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, viz. "that food, raiment, and supply in times of sickness shall be added

added unto them," verse 25, &c. Why should Christians be of a doubtful mind *in regard to food*? He who hath done such great things for the soul, shall he not also take care of the body?

"Take no thought for your life then, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink:—Behold the fowls of the air, which neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feedeth them." And if he provide for the fowls of the air, who cannot provide for themselves, how much more shall he provide for his people who are infinitely dearer to him than they are.

And why take ye thought *for raiment*?—

"Consider the lillies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more shall he clothe you, oh ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithall shall we be clothed, for your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

Thus we see that the surest way to find all necessary things is *not to seek them in the first place*, but with the dispositions of little children, who place the most implicit confidence in the care of their earthly parents for the supply of all their wants, our minds should be divested of all anxiety and fretfulness about these things, reposing upon the care of our heavenly father who does not think it beneath his regard to feed the fowls of the air and clothe the flowers of the field.

How powerful are the motives which should influence us to such a conduct;—1. To make the glory of God the leading object of our pursuit, is the most honourable conduct we can be employed

ployed in, as most agreeable to the divine will, alone consistent with the end of our being, and intimately connected with our eternal happiness.

2. It is the best way of securing the good things of this world from rust, moth, or thieves, in bags that wax not old; and thus of making to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

3. It will be the way to promote trust in God, and will lead us to have our hearts and affections set on things which are above. It will mortify us to the present world, and lead us to confess ourselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and to seek the better and heavenly country. Thus it will be a means of preparing our minds for that state of permanent felicity.

From this subject we learn;—1. That the kingdom of God is quite opposite to the bias of the human mind, and to man's natural constitution and thirst for that happiness which centres in this world. The doctrine of the kingdom of heaven proposes happiness indeed, but not of that kind which man is seeking for; the happiness it proposes stands opposed to worldly wisdom, worldly prudence, worldly lusts, and to the maxims of this world. The things of the kingdom of God are accounted foolish by worldly professors, and they must necessarily be so to all, who have no other rule of judging, but their love of worldly happiness. Hence we infer, 2. "That except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To be born again, to be born of God, or born from above, shew, that new, divine, and supernatural principles are implanted in the soul;—giving a new source of life, and producing a new line of action, which is called the new creation; a new source of happiness is found, and our pursuits are formed agreeably thereunto. Without this, no one can enter in-
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to the enjoyment, or be a real subject of Christ's kingdom, so as to appear in this world, in the profession of the faith, or enter into it in the other world. 3.—Hence we learn the reason why Christ teaches, enforces, and requires self-denial ;

“ Deny thyself, and take thy cross,
Is the Redeemer's great command ;
Nature must count her gold but dross
If she would gain the heavenly land.”

This shews, that, though the actions of Christ's subjects are influenced by the truth, and done out of love, yet, that what is properly called SELF in every man must be denied ;—that is, the obedience which the gospel enforces is contrary to man's natural inclinations. Hence there will be many disputings in our minds, many suppositions made, strange inferences drawn, and specious pretences found, as evasions to cover our worldly lusts ;—while our consciences plainly agree with what the scripture dictates ; but let us ever remember that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, where the self-denying disciple only will be able to stand.

4.—From this subject we learn, that as without the righteousness of Christ we shall never be accepted of God ; so, without the fruits of this righteousness we give no evidence that we are born of God, or that we belong to the heavenly kingdom. Every professor should weigh well the import of those important words of Christ, “ except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Lastly ;—This subject may teach us that, while many have run to the doctrines of legality and works, so many, on the other hand, in their zeal for the national religion, and care to cultivate

vate the exercises of the heart, have shamefully neglected practical religion. It should be our care to avoid both extremes, and to remember upon the whole, that "pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world."

Peace, peace, my soul, thou need'st not fear,
The great Provider still is near;
Who fed till now, will feed thee still;
Be calm, resign'd unto his will.

The Lord, who built the earth and sky,
Has past his word, nor can he lie,
Water and bread he'll give for food,
With all things else which he sees good.

He feeds the ravens when they cry,
And shall his children lack supply?
He clothes the grass, and can his saints
Suppose him deaf to their complaints?

He built our frame, with life endow'd;
Gifts greater these than cloaths and food:
Our very hairs which are so small,
With minute care he numbers all.

Then why our anxious carking care,
What we shall eat, or drink, or wear?
Our heav'nly Father will us feed;
He knows that all these things we need.

Our chief concern be to possess
God's kingdom and his righteousness;
What else we need we shall receive;
With Christ he'll all things freely give.

Thus, trusting to his care, we'll find
His peace shall keep our hearts and mind;
He who on God doth truly rest,
Must be content, serene, and blest.

SERMON IV.

Hereby do we know that he abideth in us by the spirit which he hath given us.—1 John, iii. 4.

AMONG the many excellencies of the scriptures, none is more evident or practically useful, than the correct distinction which they make betwixt holiness and sin, and the infallible criterion, which they afford us for judging of ourselves. This may be fully expected from the dictates of their Author, who knows what is in man, and is intimately acquainted with every principle of the human heart: and who being perfect holiness himself, must be the best instructor. On these subjects human writings are highly deficient. The tests, which they propose, are not only contradictory to each other, leaving the mind in utter uncertainty; but they are brought so low as a standard of morality, that they are much more favorable to human pride and depravity, than is allowable in a case which is of eternal importance, and where a good opinion of ourselves is often the most fatal we can form. Leaving such delusive marks, let us attend to the word of God, which is highly profitable for our instruction and correction in righteousness.

I have chosen this passage in order to prove that there are those things in every one who has perceived the love of God whereby he may know that he is of the truth, and thereby assure his heart before God, that he has passed from death unto life: and this is known, we are told, “by the spirit which he has given us.”

As

As an introduction to what I have to say upon this important subject, it may be proper to promise a few things, in order to prevent being misunderstood.

Be it carefully observed then, that I am not about to speak to that very important question, "How shall man be just with God?" or upon the sinner's title to eternal life. This is only by the righteousness of God our Saviour, upon a plan of grace, which excludes all internal or external works or qualifications whatever. Nor am I about to speak of the sinner's approach to Christ, or the ground of his believing in him for eternal life. This is none other than the free declaration of God in the word to all nations and kingdoms under heaven; so that all who hear the gospel, have an equal right to believe it for their salvation, without waiting for any thing to make them differ from others. Neither am I going to speak of what we are to ground our confidence upon; for surely that must be the faithfulness of him who speaks in the scriptures in opposition to all internal experience or external performance. But my principal design is to enquire upon what grounds any professor is warranted to conclude that *he is a christian*, and to bring those to the touchstone of scripture, and the bar of conscience.

In discoursing, therefore, upon the words of the text, I shall, *First*, treat briefly on the doctrine of Christ's union with his people, expressed by "his abiding in them." And then, *Secondly*, shew that his people may come to a knowledge of this "by the spirit which he hath given them."

1. There have been many disputes in the religious world upon the subject of union with Christ. Some have thought it has been from everlasting, while others have dated its commencement at believing; and others, again, have

have said, that those who have been united to Christ, may finally perish in hell. I look upon these differences, as well as many others, concerning the doctrine of Christ, to have arisen from the different parties taking some detached part of the doctrine, which has led them to conclude their opponent's view of it to be false; and this has caused them to load it with dreadful consequences.

In speaking upon this subject, I shall make three observations. *First*, that the scripture gives us authority to say, that there has been an eternal union between Christ and his people in the mind, will, council, or purpose of God. To this proposition the scriptures afford the strongest evidence; hence sinners are said to be "chosen in Christ" before the foundation of the world; and also to have been "given to him." Again: His substitution in their place, and the imputation of their sins unto him, and his obedience unto the death for them, are unquestionable proofs of the same truth. Lastly: Since he, as their representative, rose for their justification, and ascended unto glory, to take possession of the eternal inheritance for them; hence all his people were virtually in him. This is the source of all the blessings which they enjoy; for he hath "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world." Eph. i. 3. &c.

Secondly: That there is such an union, or real connection between Christ and his people, as countenances the declaration of our text, and others of the same nature, namely, that he is *in us*, and abides *with us*, and that we are *in him*, and abide *with him*, is abundantly taught in scripture. By this union, which is fitly termed *vital*, Christ is to his people what the soul is to

the body. So Paul says to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. ii. 20. Hence he is frequently called in scripture, *the life of his people*. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear." And hence it is said, "He that hath the Son, hath life." This life gives them a spiritual sensation of spiritual things, even as life in the body implies natural sensation; the christian's ears are open to receive instruction from the voice of God in his word; hence he is said to *taste, hunger, and thirst* after more of the enjoyment of spiritual things. All activity in the ways of God arises from this; for before, the soul was "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1. But as it is from this vital union that I shall draw most of the evidence of believer's discipleship, I shall not here enlarge upon its effects, but speak a little concerning the thing itself.

Thirdly. The way and manner by which it is formed, or brought about, is agreeably described by our Lord, John v. 25. "The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." The entrance of the word of God gives life, for Christ's words are spirit and life. Through the entrance of this word into the understanding, by divine teaching, faith is begotten in the soul; and in understanding and believing the truth, the word dwells in us richly in all wisdom. In this sense principally Christ dwells in the heart, Eph. iii. 17. For us to abide in Christ, is the same as to abide in the doctrine of Christ by which he is known to us; and, by the power of his spirit, all that fulness that dwells in him is communicated through the word into the believer's soul. Thus he supports, cherishes, com-
forts,

forts, and preserves them ; and because he lives, they shall live also.

“ He abides in us,” saith the apostle. It should be carefully noticed, that there may be a *profession* of union to Christ, and a manifest disunion afterwards ; but where there is a *real* union formed, it must be eternal because Christ lives, and “ our life is hid with Christ in God.” Thus the Poet sings :

Christ be my first elect, he said,
Then chose our souls in Christ our head ;
Nor shall our souls be thence remov'd,
'Till he forgets his first-belov'd.

So also the apostle states the subject, “ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?—Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” Rom: viii. 35. 37.

Union with Christ makes its appearance in a scriptural profession of him, and manifest subjection to him as our King. And all who profess Christ's name, and become subject to him, we are bound to believe are united to him, till something appears to render this questionable. But as we are bound to receive all who make a good confession of Christ, so also we must separate from those who walk not according to the rule of the gospel, or who have any disinclination to be subject to Christ as their King, because such subjection would expose them to the contempt of the world, and the loss of wordly things. But I proceed now to what indeed I had chiefly in view, which was to shew—

2. That every doctrine that is received, has an effect upon the mind and conscience, agreeably to its own nature, which may be properly termed the spirit of that doctrine. In reference to which the

Apostle John exhorts to "try the spirits whether they be of God" by their tendency. 1 John iv. 1. &c. The spirit of every doctrine framed by men, may be justly denominated the spirit of self-righteousness, self-dependence, or self-confidence, because it leads persons to trust to themselves under some notion or other, that they are righteous. But the Spirit of Christ, which is given to those in whom he abides, has the very contrary tendency: hence, says the apostle in our text, "do we know that we are in him by the spirit which he hath given us." And here let us not forget that this is a thing capable of being known, and so stands opposed to that doctrine which teaches that persons may be in Christ, and yet know nothing about the matter. Paul says, "know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" And as this may certainly be known, so it may be gathered from the spirit which we have received, for "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Now the spirit of Christ was a spirit of humility, love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness, forbearance, and mercy; in short, a spirit that was disposed to all true godliness; such, then, must be the spirit of every one in whom he dwells; because the likeness of whatever is in him, being beheld by his people, is communicated to their minds, and in an imperfect measure imitated in their conduct.

(1.) "Every true christian has a spirit of genuine humility given him;" and this spirit is drawn from the doctrine on which his hope of salvation is founded. Hence, when the apostle would enforce this temper of mind upon his brethren, he directs their attention to the cross of Christ, and leads them there to contemplate the amazing humiliation of the Son of God. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who,

who, being in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, he *hum-bled himself*, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Phil. ii. 6. 8. Thus while he calls them to the exercise of this christian temper, he sets before them a perfect pattern for their imitation, and exhibits the most powerful motives to be conformed unto it. Thus the cross of Christ, which sets before us the death of the divine Saviour as a sacrifice for sin, while it opens up a glorious foundation of hope to the guilty in the finished work of the Redeemer, strips man of all his fancied excellencies, shews him that he is a poor, miserable sinner, and, believing the good pleasure of God in the work of his Son, leads him to "glory only in the Lord." The gospel, or the truth on which Christ's disciples rest for salvation, is of all other things the most subversive of human pride, and the most powerful incentive to genuine humility. It gives such a broad display of human guilt, of man's forlorn and helpless state, and of his being destitute of every single plea why he should not be sent to hell, and at the same time opens up such a wonderful display of sovereign grace in delivering sinners from the wrath to come, excluding all distinctions between one another, and giving such a glorious and tremendous view of the perfections of God, that the sinner in believing and resting upon it for salvation *forsakes himself*, and thereby mortifies that leading principle of self-dependence which predominates in every unbeliever. The saved sinner sees that he is vile, and therefore hates and loathes himself, while on the other hand, having experienced much forgiveness, he is led to love much. He is taught not to form an estimate of any

thing he possesses, by comparing it with other persons who have a less degree of it, but he forms an estimate of his knowledge, love, trust, obedience, or humility, by what *they ought to be*. He knows some little of God, but the more he knows of him, the more he sees he has to know; so that, far from having attained to what he ought in the knowledge of God, he finds he is but a babe. That considering the clearness of the revelation, the importance of the things, and the time he has been in acquiring that little, alas! it appears like a spark to the sun. And thus he sees that there is more darkness than light in him, and that there is no room for boasting. His knowledge, indeed, increases, but having got deeper into the knowledge of God, he says "I am less than the least of all saints."

So in regard to his love, he is led to see the infinite holiness of God, and love it. To behold his grace, mercy, and compassion, and to love their appearance. He sees himself under infinite obligations to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength; but when he reflects upon his great attachment to this present world, and the things of it, and sees how far he falls short of his duty in loving God with all his heart, he discovers his own vileness, and instead of boasting, finds that he has much cause of self-abasement before the Lord.

Again, in his experience, his confidence, his joy, or his humility; he will have no room to talk great things about them. It is true, these things dwell in him; but so infinitely short of what they should be, that they bear less proportion to it than a grain of sand does to the globe. When he thinks of the faithfulness of God, he sees that he ought to repose in it the highest assurance of confidence; yea, such as should remove far from him every shadow of fear and distrust

distrust; and as to his joy, it ought to be constant, pure, and great, even unspeakable, and full of glory. So with respect to his humility, instead of being proud of it, he sees that in the greatest self-abasement, and the most odious views which he can take of himself, he comes infinitely short of what should at all times impress his mind. So it is in his zeal and his obedience; comparing them with what they ought to be, they shrink into nothing, so that in viewing his knowledge, love, humility, experience, zeal, and obedience, he sees every reason why he should be humbled before God. But this does not put him upon an ostentatious way of shewing it by affected looks, gestures, manner of speech, or meanness of apparel, or some affected singularities, but by an unreserved confession of his short comings to God in secret, mourning over them as his burden, and praying to be delivered from them. Matt. vi. 17. Prov. xxx. 32. Thus he imbibes that *poverty of spirit*, which in the sight of God is of great price, and to which Christ promises the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven. This temper or spirit which is given him, will appear to others in his walk, which is infinitely better than talking about it. From the views which he is led to entertain of himself, he expects to be despised by others, and he knows that he deserves it. He will not therefore think it a high crime in others that they do not take notice of him, for he is prepared "to sit in the lowest room." Conscious of his many weaknesses and frailties, he receives reproof from his brethren quietly, saying in the language of the Psalmist, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in his calamity." Ps. cxvi. 5. In his behaviour he is
not

not haughty, proud, or assuming. He knows that a proud look is an abomination in the sight of the MOST HIGH." Ps. ci. 5. 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

Upon the whole, from this part of our subject we may be convinced, how vain it is for any to profess the christian character who are not *clothed with humility*. No effect is more inseparable from the knowledge of Christ, or faith in him as the Saviour. And we may be assured that when we see any person talking high things of his knowledge, his love, humility, or attainments of any kind, he makes these things the ground of his confidence and rejoicing before God, or the medium through which he takes his joy, and that he is under the dominion of a proud, self-dependant spirit, for the apostle's conclusion concerning such a character is "*If any man think himself to be something, while he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*"

(2.) "Christ gives his disciples a spirit of love."—2. Tim. 1, 17.

This Paul calls by the name of charity, 1 Cor. xiii, 4, 5; and we may learn the grounds, nature and tendency of it Gal. v. 22. Without this spirit, all our profession is *nothing*, even though we should understand all mysteries, and speak with the tongue of men or angels. This spirit Christ gives as the distinguishing mark of his disciples.—John xiii. 34, 35, and the apostle John not only in this chapter, but throughout the whole of this epistle teaches, that there can be no true religion without it. He states it as the great proof or evidence of our knowing the truth, of our having passed from death unto life, or of our being born again. In the truth we perceive the love of God, and are taught thereby to love him, and to love one another for the truth's sake. Every man's conscience can judge of the motives of his love, and every one's conduct shews

shews whether he loves in word and in tongue, or in deed and in truth, for the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-sufferings, gentleness, goodness, faith, (or fidelity,) meekness, and temperance. And the apostle James teaches that if we have bitter envying and strife in our hearts, we lie against the truth.—ch. iii. 14, 17. The truth into which the spirit of Christ leads his people, by exhibiting the most stupendous display of the love of God in giving his Son for their salvation, draws out their love and gives them peace and joy in believing it; and beholding much long-suffering manifested, much gentleness, much divine goodness, faithfulness, meekness, &c. in the temper and conduct of him, they imbibe the same spirit. And as the spirit of humility, meekness, love, forgiveness, and mercy is the spirit of Christ, so he gives his own spirit to his followers. Would we know then whether we belong to Christ? Let the appeal be made to the sober verdict of conscience, for if our hearts condemn us as destitute of this temper, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things;—ver. 20.

(3.) “The spirit of Christ was a spirit of meekness and gentleness.” This stands opposed to a haughty, magisterial, self-important temper of mind, and this was a striking feature in the character of Christ. Indeed one of the amiable titles which is given him in the scriptures is “THE LAMB OF GOD.” Hence he calls his followers to learn of him who was *meek and lowly* in heart.—Matt. xi, 29. We may remember also that, when the apostles would enforce a walk and conversation becoming the gospel, they set before us the example of HIM “who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed
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ted himself to him who judgeth righteously.”—1 Peter, ii. 23. And Paul, urging upon the Corinthian church the most persuasive and insinuating entreaties, beseeches them by the “meekness and gentleness of Christ.”—2 Cor. x. 1.—Let every one faithfully consider what effect the gospel has produced upon his mind, whether it has destroyed his angry passions, and whether it be leading him to cultivate meekness, forbearance and mercy.

(4.) “The spirit of Christ was also a forgiving spirit.” The apostle Paul speaking of the temper or spirit which rules in the minds of the unregenerate, and while reflecting upon his own former conduct, says, “We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.”—Titus iii. 3. But of himself he says, upon another occasion, “I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him.”—1 Tim. i, 16. Exhorting his brethren to the exercise of this temper, he sets before them that forgiveness which there is with God as an example for them to copy in their conduct one towards another. “Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”—Ephes. iv. 32. In the character of Jesus, this temper eminently shone throughout his life, and his last prayer for his enemies was, “Father *forgive* them, for they know not what they do;” thus setting his followers a pattern for their imitation. Let us then ask ourselves how our minds stand affected to this duty?

(5.) “Christ gives his followers a spirit of zeal and fortitude.” But this zeal stands distinguished from that fiery spirit that would curse every one

to the lowest hell who are not of their party. Let us beware of confounding these opposite tempers. There is much difference between a party spirit and that which is dictated by christian zeal. A fierce and violent spirit, venting itself in sharp and bitter passion, displays weakness instead of christian zeal and fortitude, for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated."—James iii. 17. Every disciple of Jesus receives such a measure of this spirit as prevents him from remaining in a state of indifference, as to the profession of his name or the interests of his kingdom in this world. Indeed nothing stands more condemned in scriptures than a lukewarm frame of soul.—1 Kings xviii. 21. And so Christ himself teaches. "He that is not for us is against us." There is no neutrality in his kingdom.—Those who will be his disciples indeed, must take a side which will immediately call for the exertion of zeal and christian fortitude. When the glory of divine truth takes possession of the soul; when the real beauty of Christ's ordinances and kingdom appear to the mind, it rouses the soul from a state of indifference, to act on the Lord's side. This I suppose, most will acknowledge; let us then bring the matter home in regard to ourselves, and take the solid verdict of conscience on the subject. *How is it with us?* Do the views which we have of Christ and his kingdom make us take part with him in his sufferings, and boldly stand our ground in the midst of every opposition? Do they lead us so far to fear HIM who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell, as to disregard the fear of men? May we all be under the influence of that declaration, "They that deny me before
men,

men, will I deny before my Father who is in heaven."

(6.) "He gives his disciples a spirit of grace and supplication." Zech. xii. 10. In this is included what the apostle calls the spirit of adoption, leading them to cry Abba, Father. Rom. viii. 15. Having given them to see God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and their Father as in him, they are led to pour out their souls to God as unto their Father who is in heaven. Impressed with a lively sense of their daily wants, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, they make them known unto God.

Lastly: "He gives them a spirit of humanity and godliness," which is manifested in an attention to every part of practical religion, and enables them to persevere in the same unto the end. It is not any profession of words, however clear, which will fully prove that we belong to Christ. Godliness in our lives must confirm this. Nor is it any present appearance of both, but a perseverance unto the end, for it is only he "that endureth unto the end that shall be saved." And although I firmly believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I must confess I have no other notion of it than of a believer of the doctrine of Christ going on in his profession, and the fruits of righteousness appearing in his whole conversation. Now a godly practice flowing from the principles which I have mentioned, from the spirit of truth, of life, humility, love, forgiveness, compassion, zeal, and the practical part is the proof of the sincerity of the other. For where the true grace of God dwells in the heart, it will *assimilate a tendency* to the fruits of righteousness, as a fountain has to a stream, or as the sun has to light. This is the end of *election*; for we are said to be "chosen in Christ, that we might be holy and without blame before him."

him." Ephes. i. 4. And of *redemption*; for "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Titus ii. 14. So also of our *calling* or *regeneration*, for "we are his workmanship created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained, that we should walk in them." Eph. ii. 10. Now I speak only of practice in regard to an evidence *to ourselves*. There may be much of the appearance of humility, love, &c. without a principle, but I am not speaking of acts; God regards the motives from which they flow. It is the principle, together with the fruits, that we should examine. This apostle says, "Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments, chap. ii. 3. By which I understand, his commands in regard to his kingdom, the ordinances of his house, the exercise of love one to another, and of compassion and kindness to all. Thus we see that all pretensions to the spirit of Christ are cut off while a person lives in sin, for it is an evident and undeniable principle, that all actions are regulated by the will. How can we credit that man who should tell us that it is his will to attend the ordinances of Christ, whilst he lives in the neglect of them?"

Now that christian practice is the best evidence of our profession and experience being genuine, may appear from *reason*. Assuredly, those things which shew what persons will actually prefer in their practice, when left to follow their own choice, are the proper trials, what they really *do prefer in their hearts*. Therefore, a man's actions are the proper trial of what he prefers in his heart. As for instance, when it comes to this point, whether it respects an at-

tention to any particular ordinance, or a person's attention to the ways of God in general. Here God and his ways, wherein *his* honor and the soul's comfort are included, are set on the one hand, and the loss or inconvenience of his worldly interest, which perhaps may follow his attention to them; on the other. His conduct in such a case is the proper trial which he prefers. The event proves whether he trusts in uncertain riches, or in the living God, who gives him all things richly to enjoy. So if any refuse to lend to the Lord, by giving to the poor, it is plain he trusts in uncertain riches, and not in the living God, as in the former instance, and that his treasure is on earth, because where the treasure is, the heart will be also. For "to follow Christ in heart, is to have a heart to follow him." So godliness does not consist merely in an intention or purpose of heart to do the will of God, but "in an heart to do it." Deut. v. 27. 29. Thus when Abraham had been tried, it was said of him, "Now I know that thou fearest me, because thou hast not withheld thine only son from me." Indeed this must ever be the greatest evidence to a person's own conscience. Hence we find Christ took this method with those who professed love to him. Matt. xix. 16. So the seeds sown among thorns in time of temptation or trial fell away. And this evidence is above all others insisted on in the scriptures, which from the beginning to the end are full of it. Yea this evidence will be made use of before the judgment seat of Christ, for thus the judge himself hath taught us. Matt. xxv. 34, 46.—How unspeakably important is it to have the testimony of our consciences that "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation

versation in the world." This will be better than our having the judgment of all the divines in the world to the soundness of our creed, or the truth of our experience, for this, as we have seen, confirms all other evidence.

As a general observation upon the whole it may be remarked, 1. That as the word of God does not require any of the things we have been speaking of, nor exhort any to wait for them, in order to his believing in Christ for salvation ; so no person has any warrant to conclude that he is a christian, unless he can upon scriptural authority prove, that he is actuated in his practice by the principles which the apostles were actuated by.

2. There is a great deal of difference between believing in Christ, and believing that I am a child of God. The former is to be built upon the word of God, under no other sense of ourselves than that of sinners, and which is the ground of our peace, hope, joy, and confidence. The other is grounded upon what we have been considering, and is a confirmation of the truth of our profession to our own souls—a proof that we are not deceiving ourselves with a name to live while we are dead. Great care should be taken to keep these things distinct. A careful judgment of things in this light will deliver us from the various delusive schemes about experience, and true godliness would appear more by practice than talk, while many stumbling blocks would be removed from the way of Zion's travellers. I cannot help adding, however, that if upon trial our consciences condemn us, that only proclaims to us the necessity of the blood of Christ, which flows freely for the chief of sinners—that divine blood, which cleanses from all sin, and to which the chief of sinners may
come,

come, on which they may rely, and through which be saved from the power of sin here, and the wages of it hereafter. May God bring us to this hope. *Amen.*

THE END.

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